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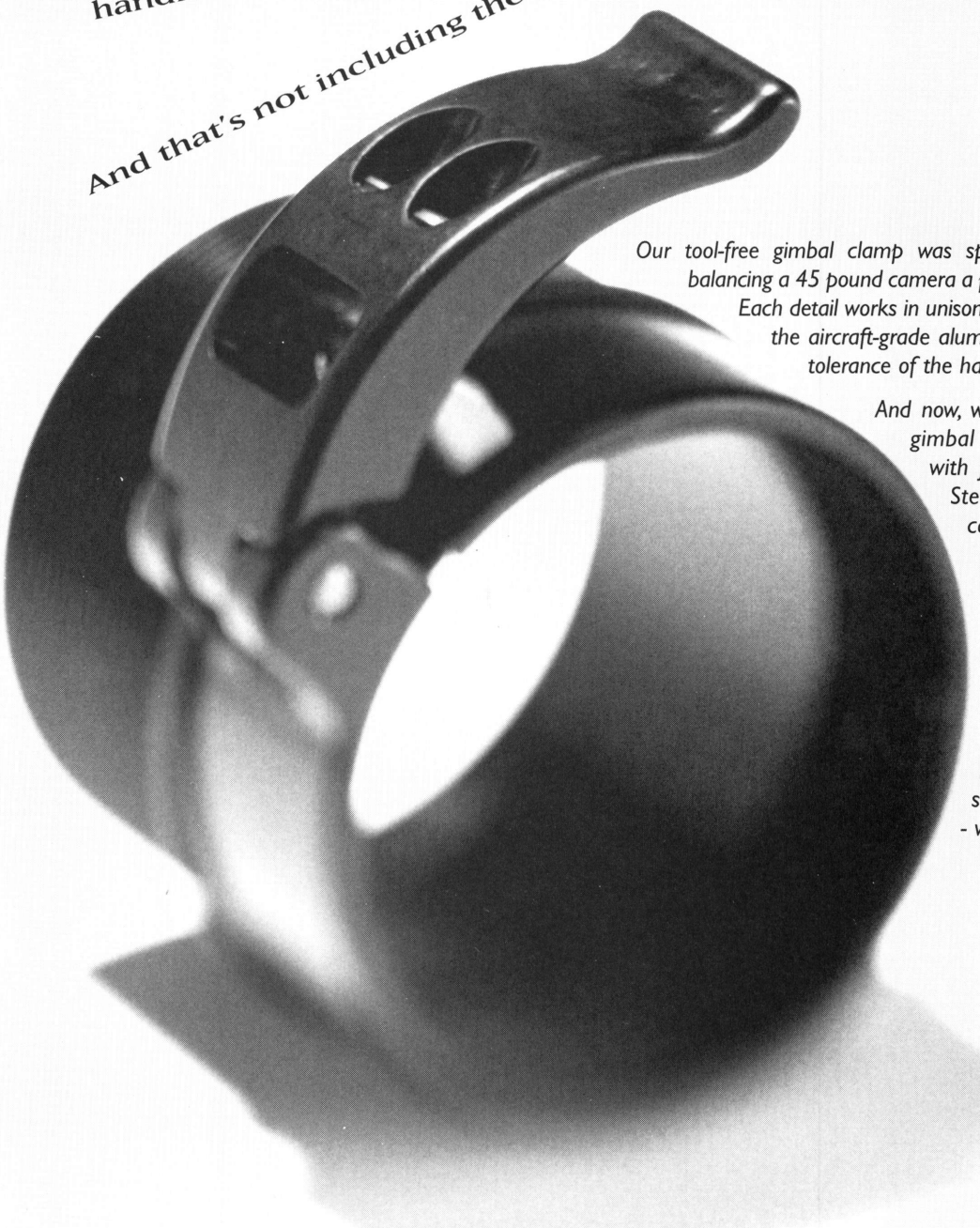

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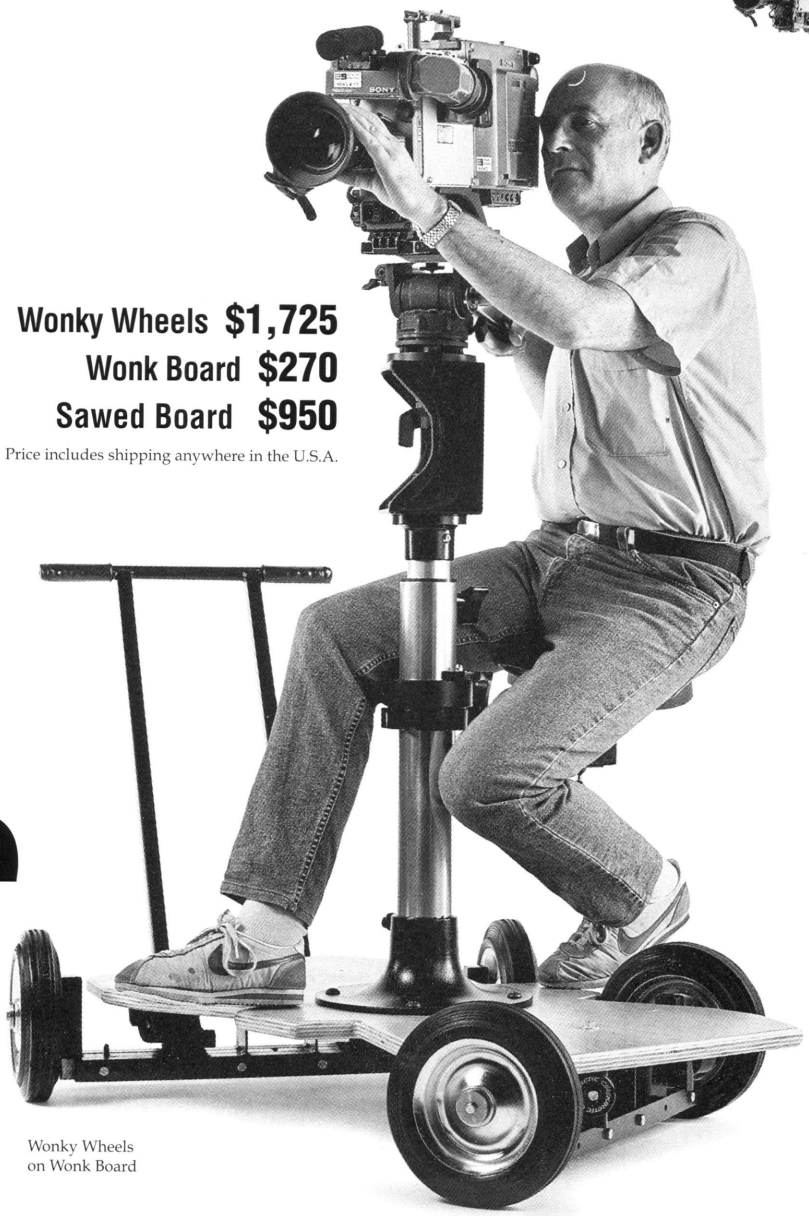
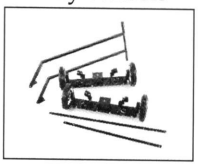


Wonky Wheels
on Wonk Board

Wonky Wheels



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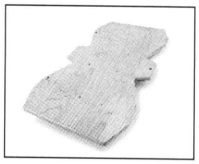

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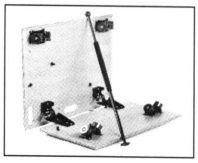

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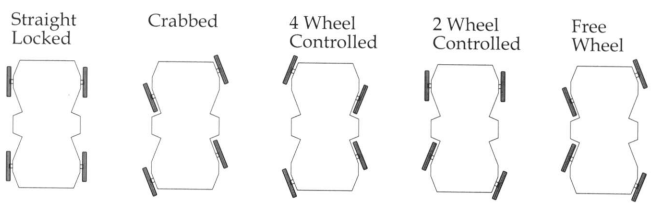

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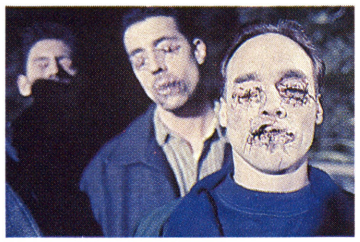
American Cinematographer

Features



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On Our Cover:
Ominous backlight announces the arrival of a sadistic reformatory guard (Kevin Bacon) in *Sleepers,* directed by Barry Levinson and photographed by Michael Ballhaus, ASC (photo by Myles Aronowitz, courtesy of Warner Bros.).

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October 1996 Vol. 77, No. 10

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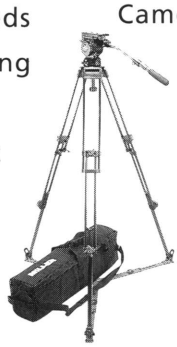

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THROUGH THE EYES OF BILLY DICKSON

Cinematographer Billy Dickson on the set of the hit series, *Deadly Games*.

Photo: Michael Bulbenko. Film: Fuji Professional Neopan 400

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for the unique look of *Deadly Games*?

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"Many of *Deadly Games'* outrageous effects are produced in the camera. So prior to principle photography we shot blue screen tests with every available film stock. The result? Fuji F-250D won hands-down—with the best blue saturation and less noise.

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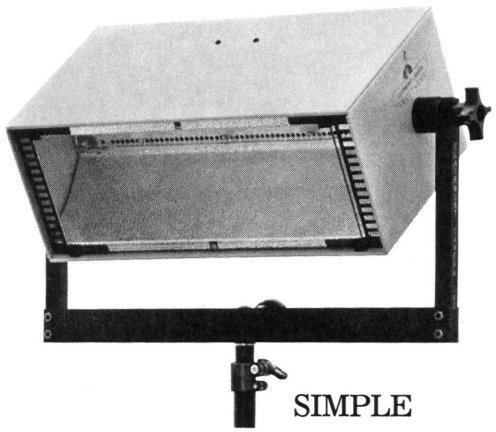
No technician

Camera crews have been handling our Strobes themselves since 1985. There has never been a special technician asking you what T stop you need and then positioning the lampheads. With our Strobes, *you* position the heads, without advice or suggestions.



SIMPLE

Less expensive

Not hiring a special technician saves money; so does not renting a special ultra-high-speed camera that eats film. Our Strobes also save you money by costing a lot less to rent. A three-head Clairmont Strobe package is about 30% less expensive than the competition.

Tabletop anywhere

Running on 110 volts can be a money-saver, too. On location, you just plug into the wall. (One 15 amp circuit per head.) You don't need to tap (illegally) into the 220 volt feed at the building's main panel.

Location interiors are generally cheaper than sets built on 220 volt soundstages. And you can shoot tabletop footage wherever there's room for a table.

Tabletop is where strobe light really shines. Each of our heads is 17 inches long and only 7 inches wide, so it's easy to move several heads in very close for small subjects. And you can *shape* the light by positioning the lampheads horizontally or vertically.

Four times lighter

The rectangular shape also makes it easy to gang them. Each head puts out 100 foot-candles at 4 feet. Gaffertape four of them together and you have a 400 foot-candle source measuring 34 x 14 inches (or 28 x 17 inches) and weighing 40 pounds. That's the weight of *one* of the competition's heads.

Using gaffertape is no problem because strobes run cool. That also makes it easier to tape gels. Color temperature is 7000°K.

Cool running helps with tabletop food

Another benefit of cool running is that ice cream won't melt as quickly and lettuce doesn't wilt. The condensation on refrigerated beer bottles stays there longer. Steam is easier to control.

Preview the lighting

To light the steam rising from the soup, you use the Preview Box and the Sync Box to run all the heads at 61 frames per second *without* running the camera. At that speed, strobe flashes look almost like regular AC light. You can look through the camera and position the heads for the effect you want.

The Preview Box also lets you switch each individual head on and off while the Strobe system is running but the camera isn't. And there's a Low Power switch on each Powerpack that gives you one stop less. Both the Preview Box and the Sync Box are cigarette-pack size, easy to hand-hold and adjust while you're looking through the camera.

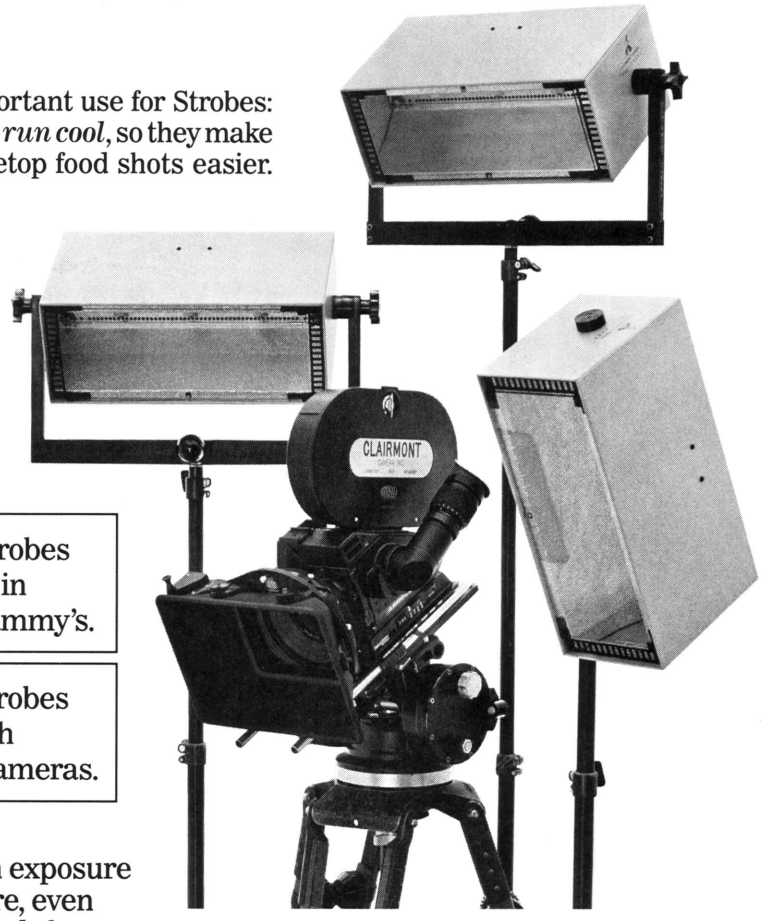
Multiple heads, multiple cameras

The Sync Box automatically relays sync signals from the camera. It has settings for flash rate (marked in frames), film-and-eyepiece or film-only, 35mm or 16mm. You can run multiple heads from one camera or use multiple cameras and multiple heads, all in sync.

Helpful Powerpack

Each Strobe head has a separate Powerpack that draws 10 to 13 amps (at 110 volts), depending on flash rate. It weighs 46 pounds and is shaped like a suitcase (6 inches wide) with a carrying handle on top. It has a red light and a beeper to warn you if you don't have a proper ground. There's also a ground lug and a wire that you can connect to a water pipe. A yellow light and a different beeper warn you if the voltage is too low.

Important use for Strobes: they *run cool*, so they make tabletop food shots easier.



Clairmont Strobes are available in London at Sammy's.

Clairmont Strobes work well with Panavision cameras.

No change in exposure or aperture, even if camera speed changes during the shot

Whatever your camera speed, a strobe flash fires in far less time than the shutter is open; so it's the flash and the T stop that set exposure. If you're using T5.6 at 24 fps, T5.6 will also be correct at any other speed, provided the flash recycle time is fast enough. With our Strobes, it *is* fast enough. You can even set the T stop and then change from, say, 5 fps to 150 fps during the shot and there will be no change in exposure.

Strobe and speed: not the same thing

Two ways to make detail clearer: slow things down (expand the detail) or sharpen things up. A sharp image of movement requires a short exposure; our Strobe's pulse flash lasts 1/50,000 second. Obviously, high camera speed isn't needed to clarify detail. You can *combine* strobe and speed, of course—ours goes up to 150 fps.

Energy and screen time

Here's what the veteran tabletop Director/Cameraman Ralph Chandler says: "Strobe light makes liquids come alive. You can really see what's going on, in sharp detail. And with strobe light, you don't need to use ultra high speed to get that effect," says Mr. Chandler, "So you can show more in the same screen time and the action keeps its energy."

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Letters

In Defense of DAT

Our company, HHB, has been heavily involved with the DAT format since it was first launched in 1988, and during that time we have sold over 25,000 recorders and well over a million DAT tapes. We would like to formally reply to Frank Beacham's article "Archivists Warn: Don't Depend on DAT" (*AC* August '96), which, frankly, we feel missed the point about DAT.

Our main points are as follows:

1. The DAT medium was never really intended to be the best format for archiving. Ideally, tape-based systems should not be used for archiving — perhaps recordable CD or Magneto Optical recorders are preferable. In the future, perhaps DVD will also be suitable. Whether it is analog or digital, two-inch or 4mm tape is subject to chemical change over a period of time.

2. DAT is a highly saturated tape medium — the tape is recorded to its full potential, and therefore is more permanently magnetized. The loss of data through reduced magnetism or print-through is minimized, whereas with analog tape it is not a fully saturated process and is susceptible to print-through.

3. Maintenance of DAT recorders is important. Many problems can be alleviated with regular servicing of DAT machines, much as you would service and line up an analog machine. When DAT machines are serviced and aligned, they can be adjusted to within +/- one percent tolerance; the DAT format allows approximately +/- five percent tolerance. A service structure is required for DAT recorders to enable peak performance of the recorder at all times.

4. Correct storage of DAT tapes is essential, and, as with archiving tapes, should be checked periodically with transfer times set. This applies to any format. We recommend that HHB's own brand of DAT tape should be stored at 15° C (59° F), 30 percent relative humidity environment. Under those conditions, long-term stability will be greater than 30 years.

5. The DAT format has been embraced by the film and location sound recording community as a reliable, high-quality, cost-effective medium. Therefore, DAT is ideal as an acquisition format — no disc-based audio recorder is suitable for professional portable use at this time.

6. The change DAT has brought to the professional audio world should not be overlooked. The proven track record of DAT as a format has been shown by manufacturers' commitment to producing increasing quantities of hardware and tape.

7. The DAT format has been taken up as an excellent transfer medium by professional users, not only on location but also in postproduction.

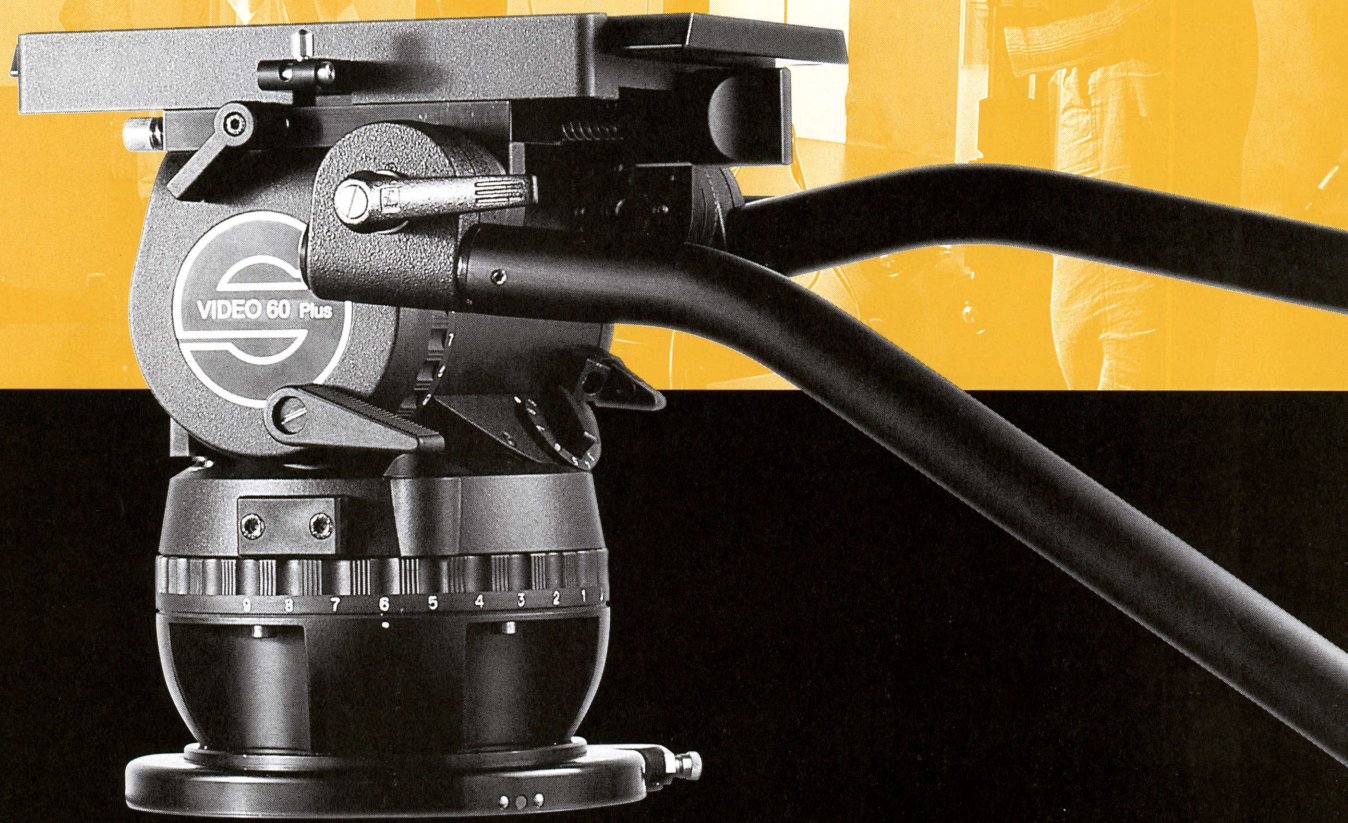
— Rob Buckler
Technical Manager
and
Ian Jones
Managing Director
HHB Communications Ltd.
London, England

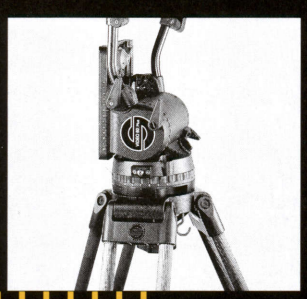
Frank Beacham responds: "I have no disagreement with HHB's statements, but I do dispute their assertion that my column 'missed the point about DAT.' The point in question is that too many DAT users are archiving on the format when they should not be. HHB is correct when it maintains that 'the DAT medium was never really intended to be the best format for archiving.' No doubt DAT has proven to be an excellent acquisition medium, but an archiving medium it is not. This was the essential stance of my column."

Please send any comments or suggestions to **Letters to the Editor, American Cinematographer, P.O. Box 2230, Hollywood, CA 90078.** Or contact us online at **ASCMAG@aol.com.**

Video 60 Plus.

Even if the newscaster can't keep his head in a crisis ...





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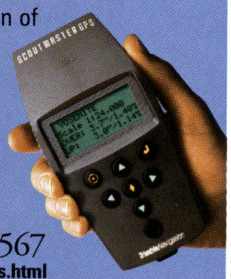

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The Wired Living Room

by Frank Beacham

As the Great Bandwidth Race of 1996 shifts into high gear, intense competition has erupted in the past few months between a growing number of high-tech companies seeking the mother lode of the information age: the "wired" living room.

Though the basic product is an affordable big bandwidth pipeline universally available to American homes, the implications of such technology transcend the delivery system itself. Many investors expect the home bandwidth breakthrough to spawn an entirely new sector of the entertainment industry — one that for the first time combines traditional broadcast television programming with the interactive information resources now available on the Internet.

Greater bandwidth means faster access to web pages, sound and graphics, and efficient delivery of substantial nuggets of 30-frame-per-second video over the Internet. Likewise, traditional long-form broadcast television programming will become increasingly linked to web pages and other Internet information now obtainable only through personal computer use.

The impact of the bandwidth race is cascading into every corner of the television industry. In recent weeks, television receiver manufacturers such as Thomson Consumer Electronics (RCA, Proscan and GE brands), Zenith (with its new Inteq brand), Sony and others have announced plans for new home television products that include Internet access. At the same time, computer giants such as Microsoft, Intel and Compaq are introducing new broadcast-friendly personal computers and software.

In the most aggressive move yet in bringing Internet access to non-computer users, Sony and Philips have joined forces with three top former Apple Computer engineers to launch WebTV, the world's first TV-based online service. If successful, this venture will allow cheap and easy Net access from any TV set without a personal computer.

Meanwhile, wired and wireless cable TV operators, direct-to-home satellite services and broadcasters of all sorts are furiously working to challenge the telephone companies' potential lock on Internet services to the home and office. Program producers and new media companies, sensing the looming bandwidth breakthrough, are preparing a new category of entertainment television programs that combine data services with traditional video.

The recent announcement that Thomson Consumer Electronics would team up with Compaq to develop a new generation of home entertainment products is an indication of the rapid rise of data-enhanced broadcasting.

Says Joseph P. Clayton, Thomson's executive vice president of sales and marketing, "We envision an initial direction of highly featured products that will particularly appeal to video enthusiasts and computer-experienced consumers who enjoy the home theater experience. Internet capability will be just one application that will transform the private experience of the PC into an entertainment and information experience that can be shared by the entire family."

According to veteran cable industry executive Hal Krisbergh, specific types of Internet content will be created for big-screen entertainment viewing in the living room ("a TV-centric platform"), and one for access by a personal computer on a desktop ("a PC-centric platform").

"TV viewers are going to be able to access Web pages, advertisers and information on sporting events that they are watching," says Krisbergh, whose start-up company, Worldgate Communications, will soon offer Internet

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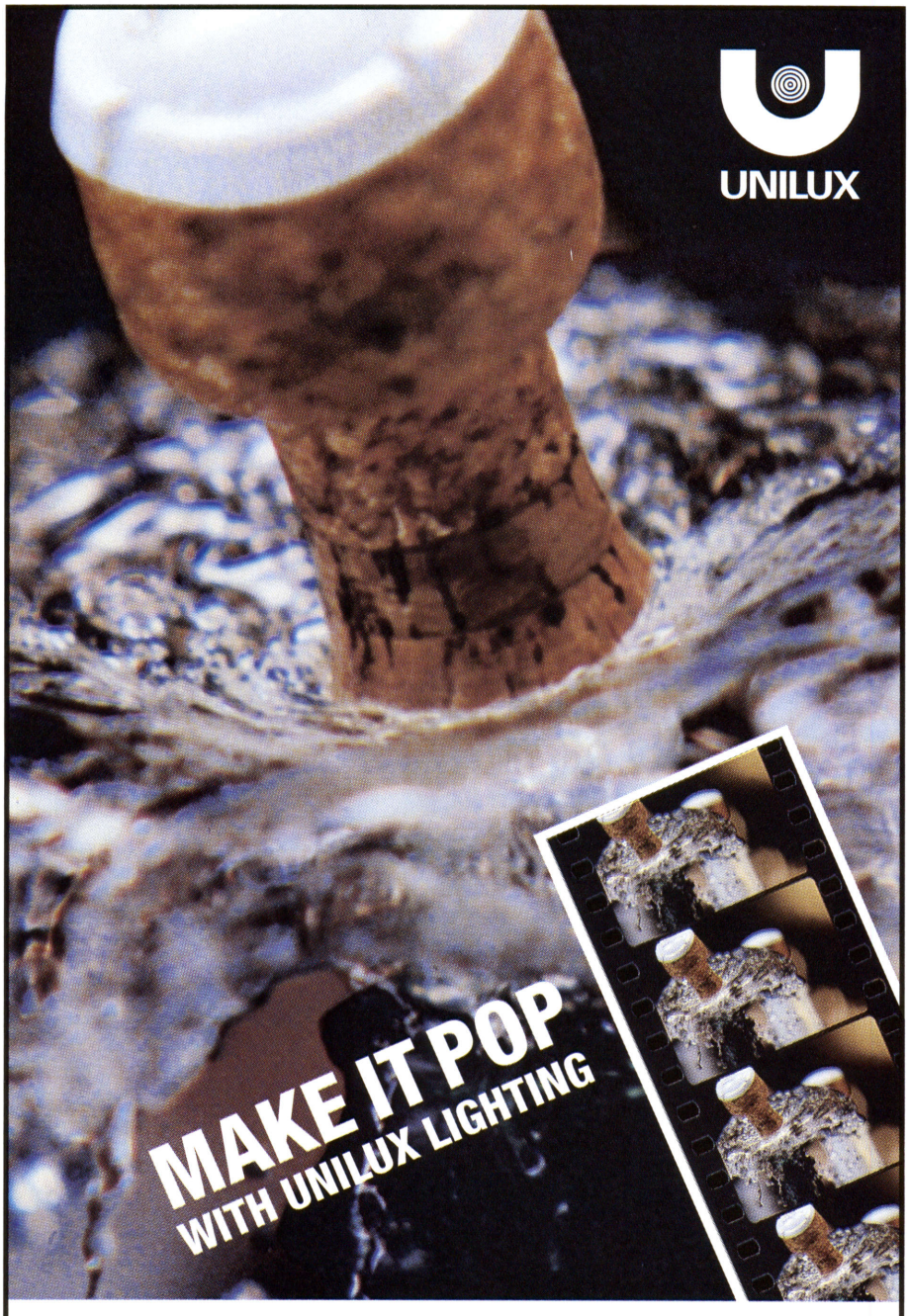

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services in the vertical blanking interval of cable programming. "All sorts of very interesting things will happen on the TV-centric entertainment platform."

Though paths of varying bandwidths may soon become available to the home, other bottlenecks remain in the vast global conglomeration of networks collectively known as the Internet. In fact, many Internet experts believe that the increased numbers of high bandwidth sound and video connections to the home may increase crowding on the Internet backbone and circuits, and actually slow down operation of the Net as a whole.

Contributing to these obstacles are the regional Internet hubs where computer systems interconnect. Says Felix Kramer, a New York City-based Internet consultant for businesses and organizations engaged in electronic publishing, "All of the little Internet service providers ultimately connect through the big Internet service providers. There are often bottlenecks at the points where these services connect. Some ISPs (Internet Service Providers) upgrade their systems and some don't," he said.

In reference to the distant days when interactive television tests challenged server technology, John Warnock, CEO of Adobe Systems, adds, "There are still server problems. Serving that amount of information over the Internet is going to be a tremendous challenge. Even with today's Internet we have to use really fast servers. At first you'll see more of a hybrid broadcast style, and then it will become more on-demand as the performance gets up there on the servers."

What is often forgotten in the bandwidth race is that these technical transformations will effect significant social changes on the Internet. The sluggish telephone connections that have so far shielded Internet users from a hurricane of advertising and propaganda should soon vanish.

Big bandwidth may also signal the end of cheap Internet hook-ups. Due to a potential bandwidth shortage, Kramer predicts that ultimately the major telecommunications companies are going to start charging for bandwidth in order to keep up with the dramatic technological demands of applications such as video and audio. ◆

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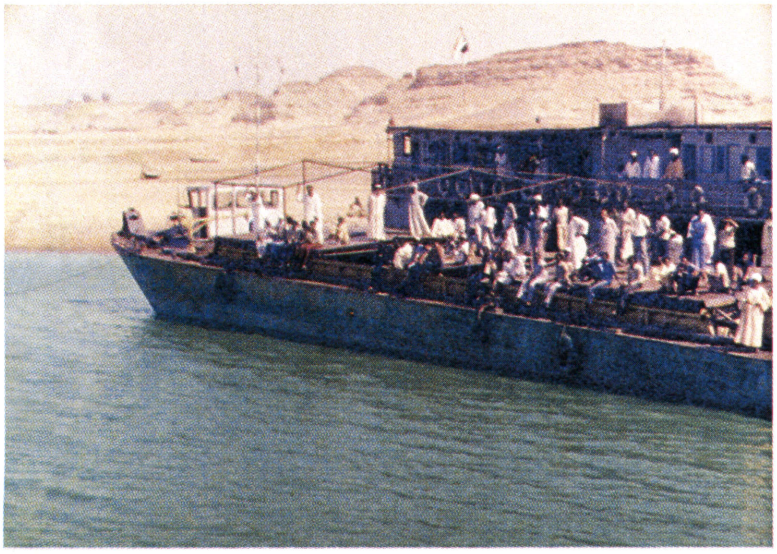

Left: ***Shot of a transport ship taken from Wadi-Halfa in northern Sudan. (Actual 16mm film clip.)*** **Immediately below:** ***Clad in a harlequin suit, the Marine Captain (Tinka Menkes) seeks solace in a dream sequence.*** **Bottom:** ***The Captain communes with a Sudanese child and a Greek Orthodox priest during her reverie.***

Photos by Nina Menkes.

The Birth of Nina Menkes' *The Bloody Child*

In the summer of 1982, I received a small grant to shoot a series of black-and-white stills of the Ethiopian Falasha Jews who were then interned in refugees camps in Sudan. The grant barely covered the cost of my airfare, but the story of these African Jews was so intriguing that I decided to accept; I also thought that it would be a great opportunity to shoot scenes for a rough idea that I had for a fictional movie. The footage from this trip ended up forming an essential part of my latest feature, *The Bloody Child;* this film's narrative is based on an intriguing *Los Angeles Times* article that detailed the arrest of a young U.S. Marines officer, a Gulf War veteran, who had been found digging a grave in the middle of the Mojave desert. The veteran's car was found parked nearby with his wife's bloody body slumped in the backseat.

Accompanying me on the arduous but enlightening African excursion was Tinka Menkes, my sister and collaborator on two prior short films *(A Soft Warrior* and *The Great Sadness of Zohara).* Preparing for this shoot was an exercise in paring down our equipment to

the essentials. Our minuscule budget did not allow for a private vehicle, so we had to rely on public transportation. Therefore, a sync-sound camera plus Nagra were out of the question because of their size, weight and crew requirements. Being more concerned with images than in scenes with dialogue, I decided upon the 16mm Arri-S with three primes on the turret, and one 12-120mm Zeiss zoom lens. On the plane, we carried the camera, lenses and magazine. Our two suitcases, meanwhile, were stuffed with 20 rolls of 16mm raw Kodak reversal stock (13 rolls of ECO ASA 64, and seven rolls of ECO ASA 400), a tripod and body brace, my still photographic equipment, make-up, costumes and, of course, our clothing.

My initial cinematic concept for the African footage was for a fractured female character (played by my sister) to be positioned within a variety of evocative African milieus; I wanted to connect the West's destructive relationship with Africa to that which the dominant Western culture has to women. All of my images were to be dreamlike and iconic to evoke the *feelings* created inside of us, or more specifically, inside of me, by external political and social realities. For the interiors, I avoided contrast, preferring soft diffused lighting that deemphasized the detail on the characters' faces. This created a painterly effect that brought out their symbolic qualities.

Given our limitations, carrying lights simply was not feasible. So, in selecting each location, we had to find one that was both visually arresting and naturally lit. Finding amazing locations wasn't hard work, and we ended up shooting a 400' magazine's worth of film at every stop. The journey began in Israel, where we traveled overland across the Sinai desert by Bedouin taxi, then south through Egypt until Aswan by train, down the Nile River and across the Nubian Desert into the Sudanese capital of Khartoum.

The most trying moment camera-wise was during our sweltering, jampacked train ride through the Nubian

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desert — people were in seats, in the aisles and on the overhead luggage racks. As the temperature was about 110°, all of the windows were wide open; this caused a mini-Nubian sandstorm to blow about wildly within the carriage. But the landscape we were passing was too spectacular to pass up — I had to have a tracking shot of the desert. To avoid the scattering sand, I loaded the camera on my lap under a scarf. The situation was a bit horrendous, but the shot was worth it and the film came out clean when developed (I had chosen Kodak's reversal stocks as they are less sensitive to specks of dirt and sand than negative films).

Arriving in Khartoum a few days later, I realized that I needed more raw stock. Inquires revealed that the nearest outlet — Dubai, the capital of the United Arab Emirates in the Persian Gulf — wasn't exactly close by. As luck would have it, we discovered a French crew in Khartoum that was conducting a training seminar for budding Sudanese filmmakers. They sold to me what stock they had — Fuji color negative, ASA 64 and 125 daylight. Fortunately, the worst sandstorms were now behind us.

From Khartoum southwards, the only means of getting around was for us to sit on top of cargo trucks transporting both potatoes and onions. Despite the bumpy ride, the relentless heat and constant exposure to direct sunlight, the Arri-S never quit. If it had, we would have been thousands of miles and many weeks away from help. With a week's travel between locations, I had plenty of time to absorb and reflect. Since there was no way to know where the truck would land us, each stop was a discovery, and many suggested a scene that I had yet to figure out.

At each new town or village, Tinka and I would first settle down somewhere (most places had no hotel, hostel or lodging of any kind) and then walk around. A particular building, grove of trees or painted wall would stand out and feel like an exterior representation of one of my internal images. Next, I would think about which aspect of the fractured woman should appear in this particular sequence. Finally, I would recruit locals to appear in the scene. This combination of inner, dream-like images and real, unmanipulated locations is a long-standing characteristic of my work.

Tinka and I spent a total of three months on the road, often sleeping outdoors and going without showers for days on end. Tired and bedraggled, our suitcases bruised and dirty, we arrived at the last leg of our overland journey: the border crossing between Egypt and Israel at El-Arish in Sinai. From there, we continued on to Tel-Aviv, where a plane to America awaited us. Israeli officials were ushering people into two lines — one for Israelis and foreign nationals (primarily European backpacking types) and one for Palestinian refugees. I guess we didn't give off the impression that we were typical Americans; without a second thought, we were waved into the refugee line. After explaining to officials that we were indeed American citizens, we were moved back to the proper line.

Israeli security is very rigorous, and we were worried that the immigration officials might ask us to open a can of exposed film, question the camera in some way, or even confiscate the film. Fortunately, we didn't encounter any problems at this border or any of the other international crossings. Perhaps this was because the Arri-S was in an old black case that didn't look fancy, and everything else was packed into our regular suitcases — we just did not look like a serious film crew! It's also possible that, for once, sexism worked to our advantage, as no one could believe that two young women could be professional filmmakers who should, would or could pay duty. Upon our return to Los Angeles months later, Tinka and I watched the dailies for the first time and were thrilled. The powerful images were disturbing yet beautiful. Unfortunately, they were more like dream fragments than the basis for an entire movie. I put the developed film and workprint into Foto-Kem's film vault and waited.

Nine years and three features later, during the conceptual stages of *The Bloody Child,* Tinka and I realized that our long dormant African footage would add an exciting dimension to the tale of the murderous Marine's arrest by a tough female captain (played by Tinka). By intercutting these images with scenes of the arrest (shot on location at California's Mojave Desert), we could give voice to the Captain's fractured, emotionally damaged "other side," which subconsciously encourages her to find some point of contact with the African characters.

In order to use the 16mm African footage within *The Bloody Child,* we had to blow it up to 35mm. (Blowing up ECO is better than blowing up negative, because instead of going from 16mm neg to IP or dupe negative, you go straight from the reversal to dupe negative.) The grainy, slightly soft effect produced by the blow-up process created an effective rendering of a complex emotional state, especially when intercut with the fine-grained 35mm military scenes. That these images are as powerful in 1996 as when we originally shot them is a testament to the importance of imagination and feeling over complicated lighting setups and sophisticated equipment.

— Nina Menkes

The Bloody Child *will open in Los Angeles on October 24 at Landmark's Nuart Theater, along with a retrospective of the Menkes' earlier work.*

Semler's Techniques Add Production Speed

While the craft of cinematography is becoming increasingly complex in many aspects, the projection and shaping of light remains a relatively straightforward prospect. Academy Award-winning director of photography Dean Semler, ACS recently took this truism to heart on the upcoming Warner Bros. picture *Trojan War,* directed by George Huang *(Swimming With Sharks).* Faced with a tight schedule and modest budget, the veteran of such complex films as *The Road Warrior, Dances With Wolves* and *Waterworld* devised a deceptively simple lighting solution that would have been impossible just a few years ago.

Trojan War is a satiric comedy that trails its protagonist as he crisscrosses Los Angeles in a frantic quest for prophylactics. Nighttime car interiors were the film's primary settings. To save the time that would have been spent rigging lights to insert cars, and to take full advantage of natural luminance, Semler first rated his Kodak EXR 5298 at 1000 ASA — a crucial advantage offered by today's fast, T-grain stocks. However, to quickly and easily add to his base, the cinematographer and his gaffer, Jim Gilson, then ingeniously fashioned and utilized what they later dubbed the "lightbrush" (see diagrams on page 20).

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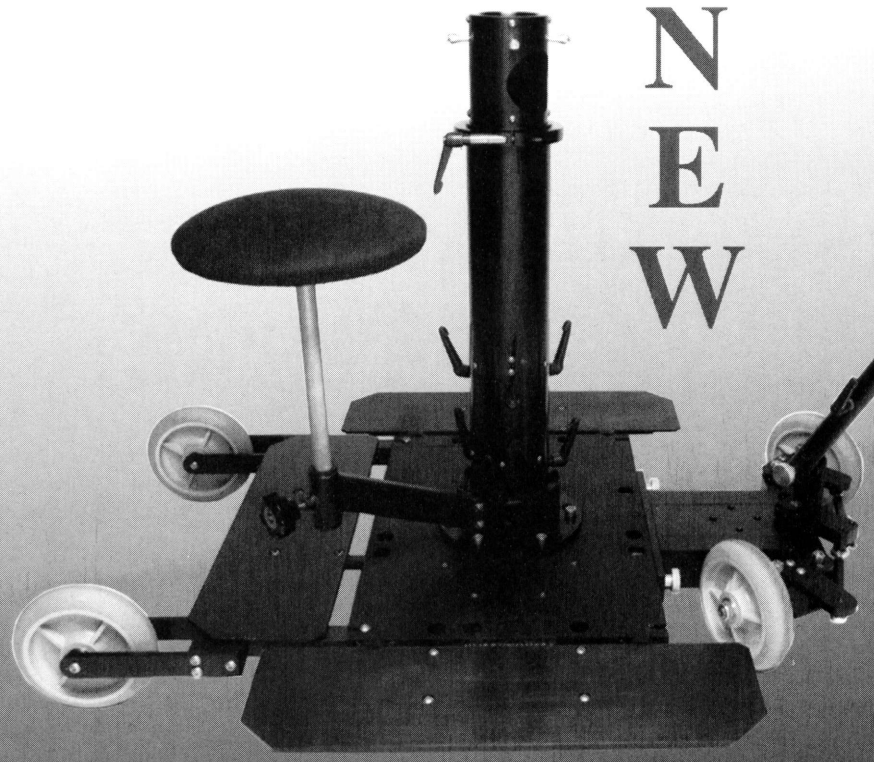

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Below Left: ***Blueprint for the "lightbrush." Schematics are for scenes in which the devices lent an aura to a dancing duo, and mimicked the illumination of street lamps and vehicular headlights.*** **Below upper right:** ***A manual method of ascertaining focal lengths for location work that Semler adapted from ancient astronomical techniques.*** **Lower right:** ***Semler sweeping a scene with one of his "lightbrush" instruments.***

D-cell Maglite flashlight, the lightbrush features a black-finished, 5" x 5" metal diffusion box mounted over the bulb end. The interior of the box is white, and a slot for scrims and gels has been fashioned. Powered by NiCads for optimum mobility, the 3000° K source became the perfect solution for the crew's situation.

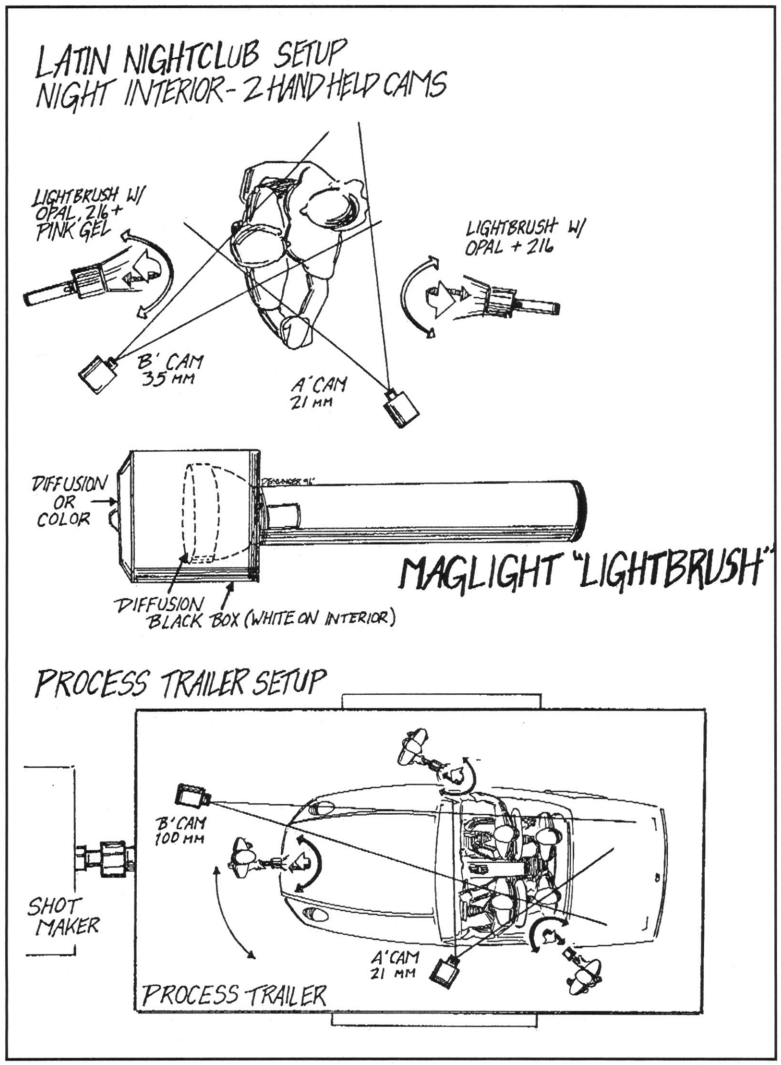
During a recent visit to Warner Bros., Semler staged a lightbrush demonstration utilizing a Jaguar E-series sports car which figures in the picture. Several assistants and PAs were drafted as stand-in passengers while the cinematographer, Gilson and an assistant formed a triangular configuration around the car, each armed with a lightbrush (see diagram). Each was diffused and gelled differently to suggest various street-type sources. By asynchronously sweeping the trio of soft beams across the auto, which would be mounted on a process trailer for an actual shot, they expertly created the effect of passing cars and street lighting.

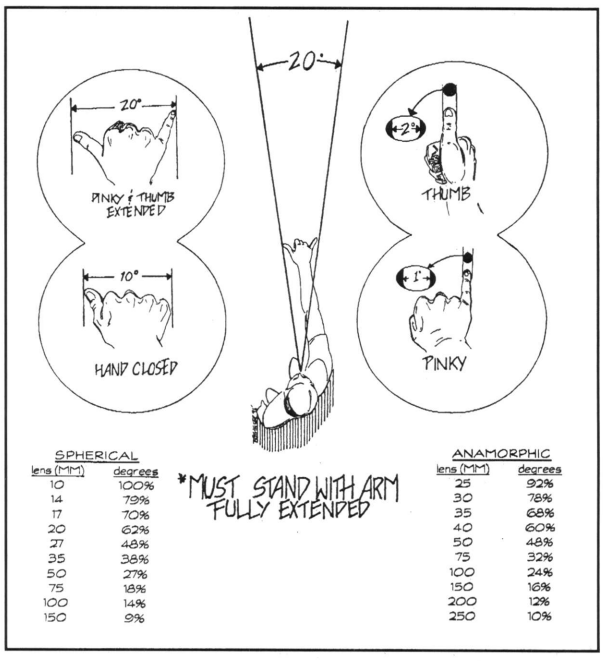
While shooting the actual scenes, the output from the lightbrushes ranged from T1.4 to T4. Since the filmmakers were shooting with 1000 ASA-rated stock, the camera aperture was set to T2.5.

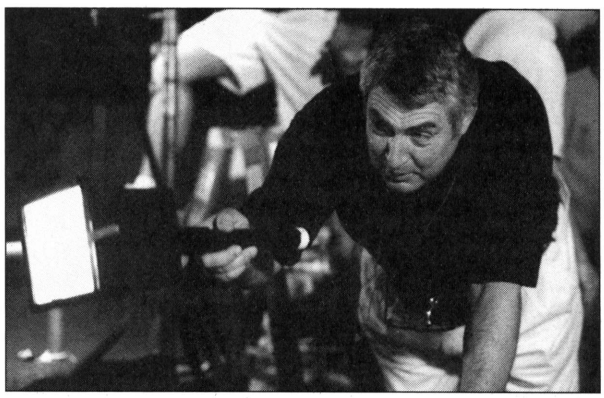
"This is the best-looking nighttime car lighting I have ever done," Semler says enthusiastically. "And it's so deceptively easy. But the key is that the lights themselves are very lightweight and maneuverable. Because they're handheld, you can pop them in any place for a bit of fill. We had several shots of feet working gas and brake pedals — shots which are sometimes difficult to light because the space is so cramped. But with a lightbrush, it was just a matter of simply pointing the light in there. Adding a second one coming through the side window created a sense of movement. By not confining the lights to stands, you don't get that repetition of movement that always tips off this kind of lighting."

Semler says that the lightbrush is effective enough to use with any ASA down to 320. "After that, you can only use it in very tight shots. But while it was originally designed for this car work, we soon found plenty of other uses for it."

The device was utilized throughout the shooting of *Trojan War,* including one nightclub sequence in which the camera followed a couple dancing across a crowded floor (see diagram). While Chinese lanterns could be one solution to illuminating this situation, Semler points out the directionality offered by the lightbrush. "This way we could fully control the source, keeping it right in where we needed it without any spill on the rest of the scene. We also had total freedom because we didn't







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need heavy cables or battery belts. The lightbrush just danced right along with our couple."

How did Huang react to having his film lit with flashlights? "When Dean first showed [the lightbrushes] to me I thought it was a joke!" the director admits with a laugh. "But they work great and saved a lot of time, which was important because we were running on short summer nights and trying to do 30 or so setups [each day]."

Semler also illustrated that mere manual dexterity can be easily utilized to aid in one's choice of focal lengths. Semler picked up this technique from the field of astronomy after visiting the Keck Observatory in Hawaii. He explains, "Determining the angle of any lens is really a question of how many degrees of view it should cover. In the process of learning how to chart stars many years ago, astronomers found that by holding their hand out at arm's length, they could determine various degree measurements [refer to page 20 illustration]. I started using this method on *Waterworld* to determine how much more daylight we'd have at any given time — just by sticking an arm out to measure the degrees from the sun to the horizon, knowing that it travels about one degree every five minutes. I've simply adapted that technique and converted it to millimeters. So by eyeballing a subject and figuring out how many degrees you want to cover, you can then look at a [conversion table] — or calculate by memory — to determine which lens you need to do the job."

Working Relationships: An Intricate Web
American Cinematographer
Las Vegas Revue: Scorsese, Richardson Play Con Game in Casino
Showgirls Storms Up the Screen
Plus: Assassins, Nick of Time, Strange Days, Home for the Holidays, The American President, The Tuskegee Airmen

AC Wins *Folio:* Award

Fresh on the heels of its 1996 Maggie Award honors (Best Communication, Advertising and Entertainment Issue — Trade), *American Cinematographer* recently earned another major publishing garland — a *Folio:* Editorial Excellence Award. *AC* was named the nation's Best Entertainment Business Publication in the trade category.

Presented annually for the past seven years by *Folio:*, the publishing industry's magazine of record, the Editorial Excellence Awards draw entries from across the entire United States. Contestants are rated by a panel of industry experts on how clearly their mission statements are defined, how well the submitted issues accomplishes the goals of the mission statements, and how the magazines' features, departments and design support those editorial intentions. This year's competition drew more entrants than ever before; of the 384 submissions, 58 were honored for "fulfilling the editorial standards set for themselves."

The results of the competition were published in the August 1, 1996 issue of *Folio:* magazine. Below, we have included a look at *AC*'s stated "editorial mission," along with the judges' assessment of the magazine.

Entertainment Business (Trade)
American Cinematographer
(ASC Holding Corp.)

Editor: Stephen Pizzello
Frequency: Monthly
Issue: November '95

Mission: To serve filmmakers by exploring the artistic thought processes of the film industry's most innovative and talented directors of photography, and explaining the technical means by which they realize their creative visions.

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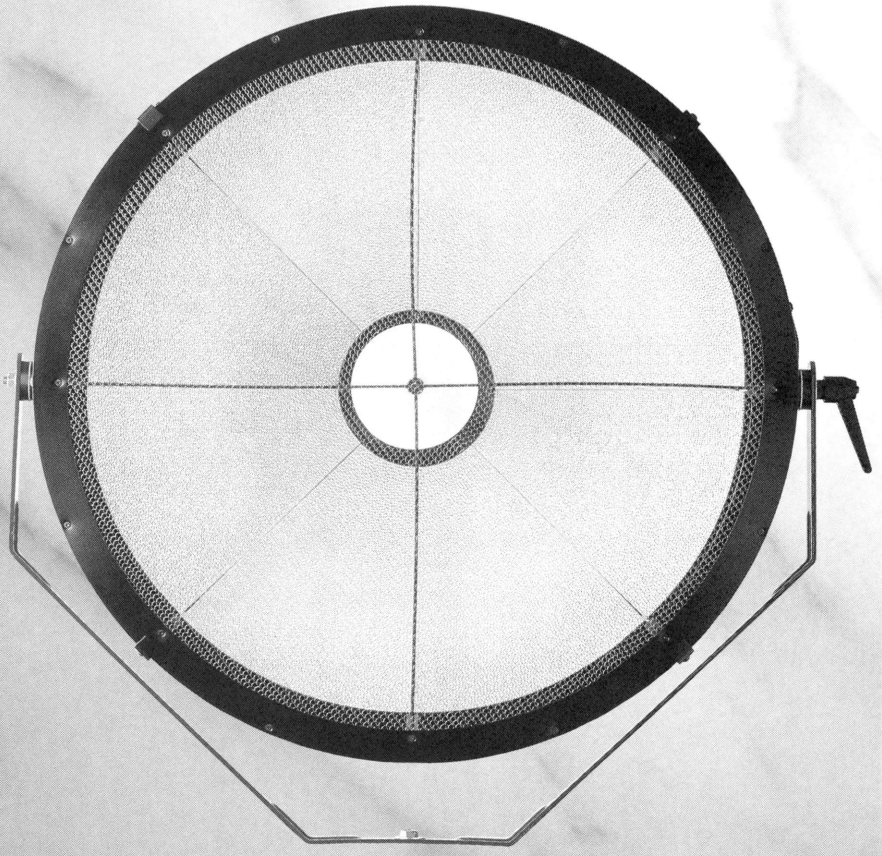

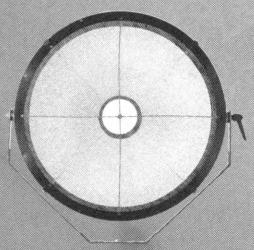

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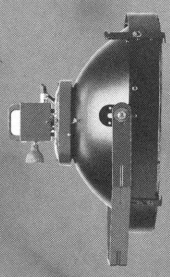
Chris Menges used Aurasoft lighting extensively during the production of this major film.



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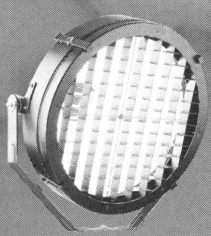

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Is this a way to eliminate the director's finder? "I'd just say it's a fast way to get what you want with one fewer piece of gear," Semler replies. "It's just my common practice now, and anyone can do it."

The cinematographer is currently preparing for his directorial debut on the film *Firestorm.* Will he light it with a match? — David E. Williams

The Tape House Posts *The West*

The Tape House recently provided extensive postproduction service for *The West,* an eight-part documentary series for Public Television from New York's Insignia Films.

The West tells the epic saga of the American West from before the arrival of Spanish conquistadors up until modern times. The documentary combines footage shot on location in 18 western states with animated archival photographs and first-person accounts from diaries, letters and journals read by many of the country's leading actors.

The series was cut on three Avid Film Composers, each with 27 gigs of memory. The editors imported the Filemaker Pro database into Avid's Medialog system to streamline logging. Tape House colorists John Dowdell and Richard Dare used two of the facility's Ursa Gold telecines to transfer the 16mm negative to DCT. Editors Peter Heady and Jay Tilin handled the on-line edit in one of the Tape House's digital suites, maintaining the project's all-digital path. Episodes were auto-conformed by Tape House editor Stuart Oppenheim.

Instead of making a show-length interpositive, the producers of *The West* desired greater flexibility from their negative. Notes Kantor, "While it's easy to reshoot a still photograph on an animation stand, we wanted to preserve our unique aerial and landscape shots whenever possible." The producers elected to protect the integrity of this material by pulling full takes, while designating the remaining negative to be pulled with 16 frame handles and assembled on single-strand rolls.

Elliot Gamson, president of New York's Immaculate Matching, dictated the process using proprietary software. Gamson assigned exclusive time code to all video dailies, and created a database that cross-referenced time code to film keycode numbers. Upon picture lock, Gamson created negative cutting documentation, and the negative selects were assembled. He then assigned the selected reels new time code and created an EDL for on-line auto-assembly of each show. Noelle Penraat handled the negative cutting, while Rob Issen, general manager of the Tape House Computer Ink and Paint, created animated maps with moving montages.

Elements were shot on a double-fixed, pin-registered Oxberry animation stand and transferred jump-free in one of the Tape House's Ursa Gold Telecines. They were composited in the Kadenza suite at the company's sister facility, Tape House Digital. Paul Barnes was the series' supervising editor, and the optical title sequence was produced by John Alagna of The Effects House. Sound was edited on digidesign's Pro Tools PostView Systems under the supervision of sound editor Ira Speigel. The sound mix was done at New York City's Sound One.

The Tape House, (212) 557-4949. ◆

Chesterfield Screenwriting Fellowships

The Writer's Film Project (WFP) is once again offering up to five $20,000 fellowships to aspiring theater, fiction and film writers interested in a screenwriting career. This year's deadline is October 15.

Originated at Amblin' Entertainment and now sponsored by the Kennedy/Marshall Company, the Chesterfield WFP has thus far awarded more than $800,000 in fellowships. Guests and mentors at WFP events have included Steven Spielberg, Warren Beatty, Nick Kazan, David Koepp, Harold Ramis and many others. WFP alumni have written scripts for Paramount, Warner Bros., Disney, Universal, Columbia, MGM, United Artists, American Zoetrope, Amblin Entertainment and other independents and studios.

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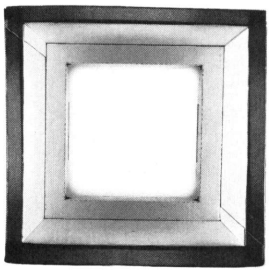
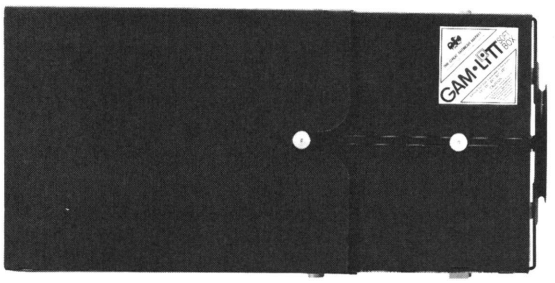


Front view showing gel/diffusion frame



Telescoping snoot

Support rods & GamRing

GamLitt, shown with GamRing installed

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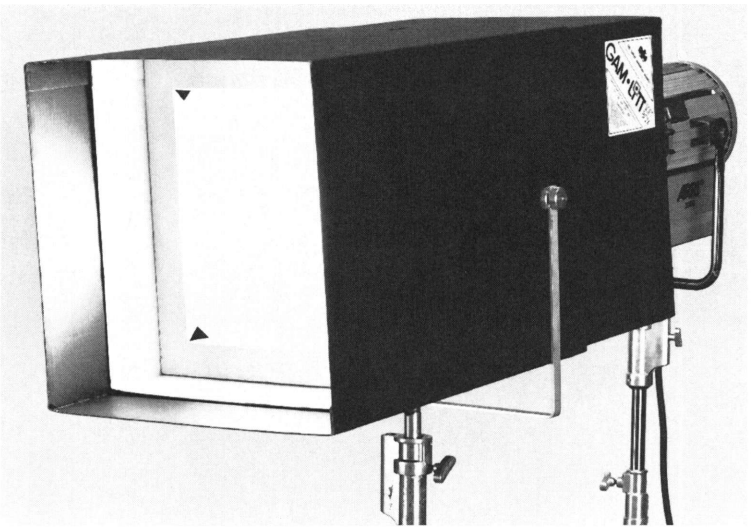
Use the snoot supplied with the GamLitt kit to contain the area of diffused light. The snoot allows you to cut down the spread of the soft light and can be easily cut to allow the light to spill in a specified direction. The inside of the soft box is painted with a highly reflective white that dramatically increases the light output. **GamLitt folds flat for shipping or storage.** It can be purchased in kits or as separate components. Options include the GamRing (available in six sizes) and a yoke for independent suspension or mounting on your stand.



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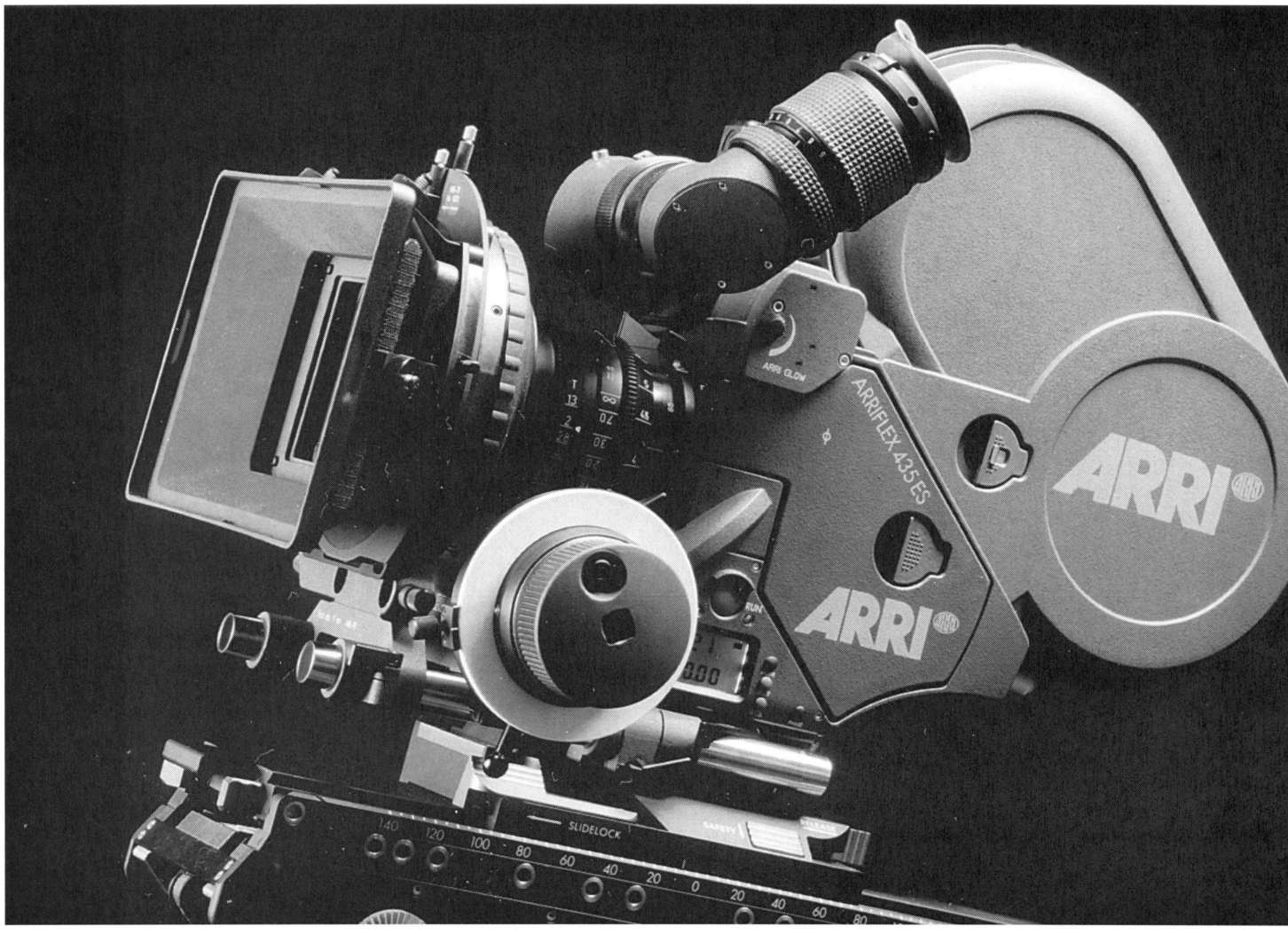

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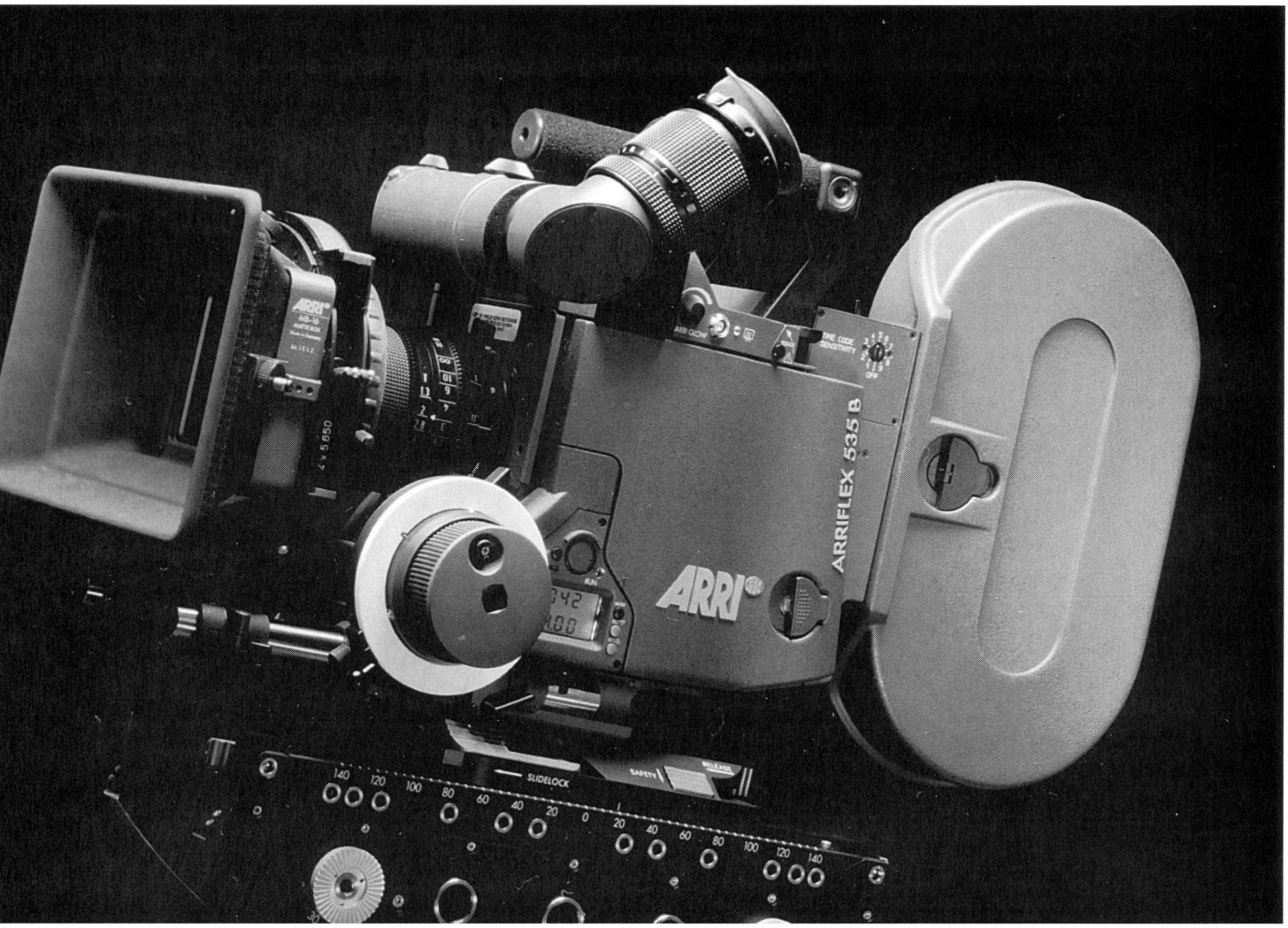

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Arri Illuminates British Contingent

European coach tour, staged in Munich and its scenic outskirts, offers overview of company's operations and latest camera and lighting gear.

by Stephen Pizzello

In British parlance, a "busman's holiday" is the rough equivalent of what we Yanks refer to as a "working vacation," a getaway spent in pursuit of further knowledge about one's professional occupation. This past July, the Arriflex Corporation's Munich headquarters and its sister company, Arri (GB) Ltd., combined forces to offer just such a field trip to members of both the British Society of Cinematographers (BSC) and Britain's Society of Television Lighting Directors (STLD). Included in the excursion were a comprehensive behind-the-scenes tour of Arri's corporate headquarters in Munich, including its camera rental and manufacturing departments; a visit to the company's nearby lighting rental facilities; a hands-on demonstration of Arri's latest lighting innovations at Kloster Seeon, a converted monastery in the Bavarian Alps; and a day trip to Lake Chiemsee, where the event's attendees could socialize and compare notes on what they had seen.

Given the rarity of such an event (Arri had last staged a European jaunt of this kind in 1986), *American Cinematographer* happily accepted the company's invitation to join the trek. As the magazine's benevolent but travel-happy dictator, I opted to invoke "executive privilege" and serve as *AC*'s representative overseas, heedlessly braving the dangers of both jet lag and home-brewed schnapps.

Upon my arrival at London's Heathrow Airport on Thursday, July 18, I was greeted by the ever-accommodating duo of sales director Nick Shapley and marketing coordinator Sharon Atherton from Arri (GB). The next morning, we headed back to Heathrow to rendezvous with Arri (GB) group chairman Derrick Ross and the rest of Arri's participating staff members (lighting product manager Barrie Guy, international lighting sales manager Richard Maskell, sales counter manager Graham Kerr, international lighting sales executive Robert Williams, Arri Media business manager Simon Broad, Arri Bell Lighting marketing manager Tim Ross and operations manager Tony

Hester, and volunteer Petra Knickenberg), along with assorted members of both the BSC and the STLD.

Cinematographers in attendance included BSC members Paul Beeson, Gerry Fisher, Tony Impey, Ivan Strasburg, Ashley Rowe and John Walker, as well as Lawrence Jones, Nic Sadler, Kevin Rowley, Alessandra Scherillo, Trevor Brooker, Oliver Curtis, Barry McCann, Alistaire Meux and Rob Payton. Lighting directors from the STLD included Joe Breslin, Roger Duncan, Stan Jones, Tegid Jones, Mark Kenyon, Bill Lee, Dave Lock, Geoff Thonger and John Watt.

Also along for the ride were gaffers Mickey Brown, Dave Mason, Ted Read, Stuart Roweth and Andi Taylor; camera rental titan Joe Dunton, BSC; lighting rental executives Ian Blackie, Steve Knight, Tony Lucas, Mike McMullan, Bernard Moylan, Keith Rowden, Michael Saunders, Simon Stephens, Bill Summers, and George Thomson; bulb manufacturer Clive Connor; BBC OB engineering manager Ian Dow; bulb wholesaler John Edwards; studio executive Peter Lawes; sales and installation executive Robert Peach; and journalist Ruth Rossington.

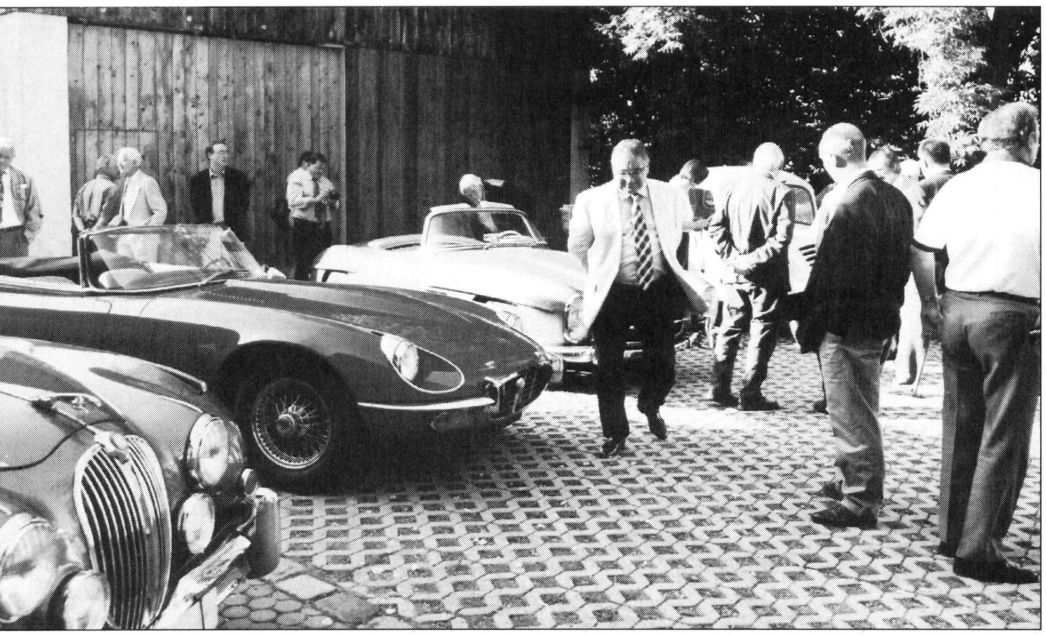
After flying into Munich, the group was transported by coach to Arri's main facility on Türkenstrasse. The site has served as Arri's headquarters since 1917, when the company was founded by August Arnold and Robert Richter, who worked as camera operators and rented out cameras from their small shop. In subsequent years, the company's rapid growth and technological innovations (see box on page 33) led to four subsidiary facilities located in the United States, Great Britain, Italy and Austria. The Arri empire is currently jointly owned by Robert Arnold (son of August) and Dr. Walter Stahl. Arri (GB) Ltd. (formed in 1983) serves as the parent company of two rental divisions: Arri Media (camera rental) and Arri Bell Lighting (lighting rental).

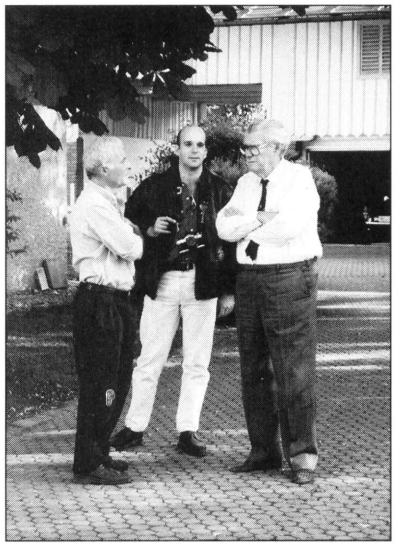
Our visit to the Munich facility began with a light lunch and a greeting by Arri sales and marketing chief Horst Bergmann. The visiting contingent was then split in halves and squired around the factory site. Stops were made in every department, including camera service, camera repair, optics, lens testing, sound testing (including a peek inside Arri's new suspended soundproof room), optical camera testing, component quality testing, camera design/final assembly, quiet camera assembly, camera rental (where group members examined one of Arri's eight 765 65mm cameras) and lab facilities (developing, color timing and optical printing).

The visitors were then reassembled into one group for a tour of Arri's on-site television studios, which offer a complete range of state-of-the-art lighting and postproduction tools. Day one was capped in the facility's very own cinema, where the guests were shown clips from Arri's digital work on commercials and features, and then given a hands-on look at Arri's full range of cameras, including the 16SR-3, the 435, the 535A and B, and the 765. That evening, attendees were treated to dinner at the Kreitmeier restaurant, a traditional German "beer garden" located in nearby Keferloh.

Saturday's program started with a quick tour of Arri's Lighting Rental facilities. The group was then bused off to its next lodgings, Kloster Seeon in the Bavarian Alps. An historic monastery that has been converted into a top-notch hotel with entirely modern conveniences, Kloster Seeon served as Arri's headquarters for the day. Following lunch, the attendees were assembled for a demonstration of Arri's latest lighting products by lighting product manager Barrie Guy, lighting division factory manager Jürgen Matthäus and lighting division R &

Opposite: ***The lakefront Kloster Seeon is lit in spectacular fashion by an array of Arri lamps.*** **This page, left:** ***Arriflex joint owner Robert Arnold (left) chats with lighting division factory manager Jürgen Matthaus at the Apfelkam restaurant in Bavaria.*** **Below:** ***Arri sales director Nick Shapley (right foreground) and tour participants examine the overhead lighting grid in the Munich headquarters' on-site television studio.***





Above: ***Visitors at the home of Robert Arnold ogle their host's impressive collection of classic automobiles.*** **Far right:** ***John Watt of the STLD, sporting a pair of homemade horns fashioned from a hotel coat hanger, regales Petra Knickenberg and Nick Shapley with his barbed wit during a post-meal roasting of the assembled guests at the Apfelkam restaurant.*** **Near right:** ***Buoyed by a shot or two of home-brewed schnapps,*** **AC** ***editor Stephen Pizzello (center) eavesdrops on cinematographers Ivan Strasburg, BSC (left) and Paul Beeson, BSC at the Arnold property.***

D manager Reinhard Kulterer. Of particular interest were the company's new 6K Arrisun unit; the latest versions of the Arri Compact (available in 125W, 200W, 575W, 1.2K, 2.5K, 4K and 6K configurations); the new 12K/18K daylight fixture (double-ended Fresnel spotlight); and the newly redesigned 300W, 650W and 1000W Junior Plus tungsten units.

Guy also offered an overview of new product development, focusing on the recently debuted Arrisun 60, the Compact 200 and 6000 units, the Arri T-12 tungsten unit (a 12K lamp that can be fitted into a 10K head) and the Arri T-24 (a 24K lamp that can be fitted into a 20K head). Last but not least, the team presented a sneak peek at new tools that Arri will unveil in the near future, including the Pocket Par (an Arrilux 125W SE HMI); the Arrisun 2 (a 200W single-ended HMI; the Arrisun 5 (a 575W SE HMI); the Compact 125W (125W SE HMI); and the new 575/1.2K Universal Electronic Ballast (offering AC/DC operation from 22-66 volts).

Following a brief question-and-answer session, the caravan was off again to visit the home of Arri co-owner Robert Arnold. After viewing Mr. Arnold's eye-boggling collection of classic automobiles, our group was shuttled off to a traditional Bavarian restaurant, the Apfelkam. A hearty meal ensued, after which STLD stalwart and renowned raconteur John Watt regaled the assemblage with a comical, roast-style address.

Later, on the way back to Kloster Seeon, our bus driver pulled off the road to afford us a view of the lakeside monastery, which was illuminated in spectacular fashion by a variety of Arri lighting units. Three Arrisun 60s mounted on motorized stirrups (hung from a 60-meter cherry picker) created wave and searchlight effects, while Kloster Seeon's large white face was illuminated by an array of Junior 1K lampheads outfitted with six color scrollers, which cast a range of blue hues upon the monastery's outer wall. Junior 650 Plus units were used to bring out the building's smaller architectural details. Adding to the overall effect were a 24K tungsten lamp running in an unmodified Studio 20K lamphead (which illuminated a mood-enhancing mist rising from the lake), and an 18/12K Daylight unit, which was swung across the lake's right-hand side.

The next morning's destination was Lake Chiemsee, a vibrant waterfront locale offering boat rides to a small nearby island that once served as home to both nuns and monks. During a relaxed repast that lasted several hours, the tour's attendees sat back to swap techniques and trade stories from the photographic trenches.

A great deal of discussion centered around the differences between working in England and the United States. Taking stock of the big picture, cinematographer Kevin Rowley, who specializes in shooting television dramas, opined that U.S. municipalities are much more film-friendly than cities in the U.K. "People don't help you so much here in England," he said. "They're not as interested in filmmakers, so it's more difficult to get permits and to get local authorities to cooperate."

Veteran cameraman Paul Beeson, BSC (who has headed up second units on such prestigious

projects as the *Indiana Jones* trilogy, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, *Willow*, and the James Bond adventures *Thunderball* and *Never Say Never Again*) agreed, noting that it's illegal to close down a street in London. "Even if they're repairing a street, they never close it," he said. "Police will sometimes give you a bit of cooperation, but many times, even if it's a tricky setup, they simply keep out of the way. They only react to people's complaints."

According to another man of experience, Gerry Fisher, BSC (1977's *Island of Dr. Moreau, Wise Blood, Highlander*), cooperation can sometimes hinge upon the stature of filmmakers themselves. He recounted one humorous incident that he says reflects the class-oriented structure of British society. "Years ago, I was working as an assistant cameraman on a picture called *A Kid for Two Farthings*. We were about to shoot in Petticoat Lane, a London market with lots of colorful characters. But we weren't allowed to go into this particular section of that area, and one day we went up onto a roof to shoot down at it. We had transgressed [our allotted area] without knowing it, and soon enough this black car pulled up and a rather large [police officer] got out. He strode up to us and began demanding, 'Right, who's in charge here?' Everyone on the crew was fudging and playing for time, but finally, our director walked over and said, 'I suppose I am.' This big guy glared at him and said, 'And what's your name?' Without batting an eye, the director replied, 'Sir Carol Reed.' The officer mulled that over for a half-second before answering, in a much more pleasant tone, 'Well, Sir Carol, will you be very long?'"

Later in the day, several cinematographers offered their views on the differences between the so-called "English system" of filmmaking (in which directors collaborate closely with both cinematographers and camera operators when composing their images) and the more hierarchical American system, in which the directors of photography supervise the work of their operators.

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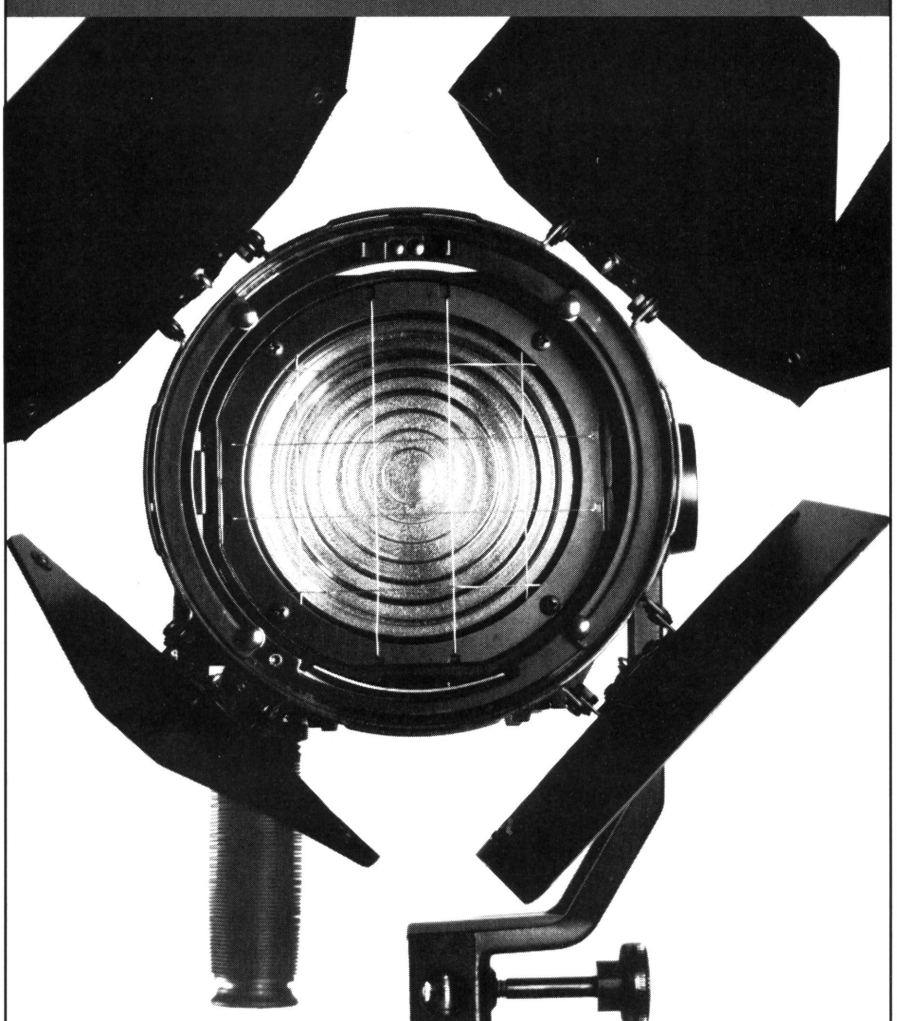

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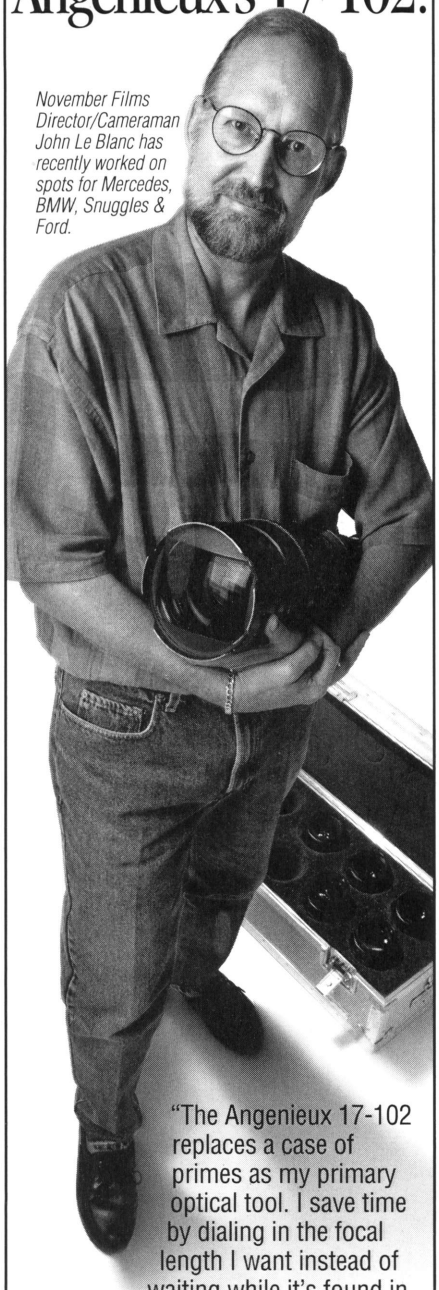
John Le Blanc on his favorite prime: Angenieux's 17-102.



November Films Director/Cameraman John Le Blanc has recently worked on spots for Mercedes, BMW, Snuggles & Ford.

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photography are accorded a much higher status, because they really have the director's ear," said Ivan Strasburg, BSC, a veteran of *The Killing Fields*. "In England, the director talks to the operator to set up the shot, while the director of photography hops from one foot to the other trying to figure out what's going on. Within the English system, the cinematographer is regarded more as a lighting technician. In that respect, I much prefer the U.S. system.

"However," he added, "I do find the American idea of having both grips and sparks (electricians) a bit unwieldy. You're constantly trying to figure out who you need to ask to put up a net or something like that. In England, anything involving the lighting is done by the sparks. Scaffolding and things like that are usually handled by one main rigger. English cameramen who work a lot in the States tell me that they quite like the American way once they get used to it, but personally I've never seen the logic of it. I assume that legal issues and union rules are the main reason that the jobs are so compartmentalized on U.S. sets."

> "This was an important event in that it brought together the [television] lighting directors and the [feature film] directors of photography...hopefully this will lead to more group meetings."
>
> — Joe Dunton, BSC

Having recently returned from a U.S. assignment, Lawrence Jones (*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*) begged to differ, as he feels that the American division of labor is productive. "I did spend a day or two asking the wrong questions, but after that I got into it, and I thought it was a more efficient way of doing things. The grips modeled the light and the sparks handled all of the electrical matters. I'd like to work more with that type of system in England."

Tony Impey, BSC (*Return to Treasure Island, Rebecca*) also cast his vote for U.S. methods. "I think the American system is far better," he maintained. "The job of director of photography can be quite lonely in England; the director tells you what type of lighting he wants, and you just go off and do it. The rest of the time he's busy discussing lenses and everything else with the operator."

As the trip's final day wound down, others in the caravan reflected upon the value of Arri's weekend gathering. Ashley Rowe, BSC, a rising star on the British scene who is set to shoot the feature *B Monkey* by *Il Postino* director Michael Radford (Rowe's other credits include *A Man of No Importance, Karaoke* and the upcoming feature *The Woodlanders*), said that such events are useful because they give cinematographers, gaffers and other technicians a chance to speak directly with Arri's executives and equipment engineers. "A trip like this allows us to air our views and also to discuss possible modifications to the equipment," he noted. "Arri (GB) and its rental companies, Media and Bell, really listen to their customer's needs, and they're responsive to our suggestions. A group of us [from the BSC] met with them a year ago, and they talked to us about ideas that they had and also asked us for any ideas we had for new lamps. We talked about small HMIs, and on this trip we got to see them. Those units will really fill a hole in the market; whenever we've lit for daylight and wanted to put a little splash of light in the corner of a room against a wall, it's been difficult to get a lamp of that type that's daylight-balanced. These new Arri units will really do the job."

Nic Sadler, another young talent whose work in commercials and music videos has garnered attention, said that he appreciated the sneak peek at some of Arri's newest lighting tools, particularly the smaller units mentioned by Rowe. "I was very keen on the

small, containable lamps," he offered. "I found the little 200-watt HMI quite interesting. I'll definitely use that when it comes out. When you work on the types of projects I do, you can use the equipment in a much more aggressive way; lately, for example, I've been using Arri's speed-aperture compensating device quite a bit."

Joe Dunton, BSC maintained that one of the trip's main benefits was in allowing a group of professional cinematographers, lighting directors and other technicians to become more closely acquainted. Unlike the American Society of Cinematographers, the British Society doesn't have a clubhouse or regularly scheduled meetings, making the Arri event a relatively rare opportunity for BSC members and their fellow attendees to interact. "This was an important event in that it brought together the lighting directors and the directors of photography," he said. "We don't get to see the television cameramen very often at all. Hopefully this will lead to more group meetings. It might be nice to have an annual event involving the STLD and the BSC.

"What you saw from the Arri point of view was an incredible organization," he added. "Arri manufactures film cameras, processes negative and projects its own pictures in one facility. The staff there takes an interest in the whole process, and their technical expertise is very good."

John Watt of the STLD felt that the trip's casual, informal feel helped facilitate easy communication between members of his group and the BSC. He also voiced optimism that the friendly exchange of information would continue in the future. "I enjoyed the social element enormously, and I felt that the low-key atmosphere really helped everyone to unwind and get to know each other. It wasn't the first time the STLD and BSC have linked up, but it's certainly unusual for us to mingle with the film people, and the bridges that were built will be very useful. From the STLD's point of view, it certainly gives us the impetus to get together with the film boys more often." ◆

History of Arnold & Richter (Arri):

1917 Arri is founded.

1924 August Arnold constructs the first mirror facet reflector with an electric light bulb.

Kinarri 35 is the name of the first 35mm amateur camera constructed by August Arnold.

1928 Kinarri 16, an amateur camera with a hand crank, is developed.

1937 Arriflex 35, the first industrially produced 35mm camera with a reflex system, is presented to the public at the Leipzig Fair.

1946 Arriflex 35 II cameras are already in production again. Over the years, more than 17,000 Arriflex 35s are built.

1950 At Stephanskirchen near Rosenheim, a piece of property is purchased where a foundry and a special grinding shop for optical lenses are built — today's lighting factory.

1952 The Arriflex 16ST is the first professional 16mm movie camera on the market with a reflex system. More than 20,000 16STs are built.

1953 This year sees the completion of the first productions in Arri's studios in Türkenstrasse.

1958 The modern Arri cinema is built on the Türkenstrasse site.

1965 Arriflex 16BL is the first self-blimped camera.

1967 Arnold and Richter receive their first Academy Award, for the design and the development of the Arriflex 35mm reflex camera.

1970 Arritechno is the only X-ray movie camera on the market.

1975 Arriflex 16SR is the first professional camera with symmetrical operating construction. In 1982, its successor, the Arriflex 16 SRII, appears on the market.

1983 A subsidiary company, Arri TV, offers complete production and processing — from studio production to postproduction — under the same roof.

1989 Arriflex 765 is the first compact, light and silent 65mm production camera with a reflex viewfinder.

1995 The 35mm Arriflex 435 is introduced.

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Sleepers, an autobiographical novel by Lorenzo Carcaterra, created a firestorm of controversy when it was published last year. And now, a cinematic version of the story — so powerful that it may tempt some viewers to avert their eyes — has emerged to fan the flames even higher. Directed by Barry Levinson for Warner Bros., it was primarily photographed on the streets of New York City by Michael Ballhaus, ASC.

Sleepers is told in three acts spanning two decades. Act One tells of four altar boys from the tenements of Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen who are sent to an upstate reform school after a prank escalates into a near-fatal accident. The "home for boys" inmates are referred to as "sleepers." In Act Two, their lives are warped by the mental, physical and sexual abuse they suffer at the hands of four perverted guards. The boys triumph momentarily when the inmates win a football game against the guards, but during the night their leading player is beaten to death and the youths are battered and placed in solitary confinement. In Act Three, the four have grown to manhood. Two are mobsters, another is an assistant district attorney and the fourth (representing the tale's author) is a newspaperman. When the two gangsters encounter one of the ex-guards in a saloon-style restaurant, they kill him. The assistant D. A. and the journalist, with the aid of the Mafia and a priest who once did time at "the home," manage to save their friends and bring death or ruin to the other ex-guards.

Carcaterra and his publishers at Ballantine Books insist that the story is true, but refuse to name names. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* question

Photos by Brian Hamill and Myles Aronowitz, courtesy of Warner Bros.

Revenge Served Cold

Cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, ASC helps director Barry Levinson realize *Sleepers*, a harrowing tale about four youths' collective experience with violence and retribution.

by George Turner

its authenticity, while the NYC District Attorney's office and the Juvenile Authority deny everything. Nobody has been able to prove or disprove the novel's veracity. "The author was on the set a lot and he always had the right answers," Ballhaus says. "He was very helpful with little details. I believed him, and Barry did too."

A pleasant, soft-spoken artist who perfected his craft in his native Germany while shooting 15 pictures for director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Ballhaus has long been one of America's busiest and best cinematographers. Since arriving in the States, he has lent his eye to such diverse films as *Heartbreakers, After Hours, The Color of Money, Broadcast News, The Last Temptation of Christ, The Fabulous Baker Boys, GoodFellas, What About Bob?, Bram Stoker's Dracula, The Age of Innocence* and *Quiz Show*.

"This was my first time working with Barry, so I called Allen Daviau [ASC], because he had worked with him on some great pictures [*Avalon* and *Bugsy*]. I got some advice from Allen that helped me. I must say, I was really surprised at how *visual* Barry is as a director, and he gave me freedom to experiment. I'm always prepared with a basic idea or concept of how a scene could work, and most of the time when I'd propose things to Barry, he'd say, 'Yeah, that's good; let's try this and go a little further.'

"I enjoyed shooting a movie where we didn't have to make compromises, because many times in our profession we have to deal with major movie stars and we can't do the lighting we want because we have to make somebody look more beautiful or younger," Ballhaus notes. "In this picture we had many stars, but they all fit into it so well that we didn't have to compromise."

An unusual aspect of the film is that several very notable actors appear in roles subordinate to those of the four younger thespians, and their performances transcended the profit motive. Says Ballhaus, "Dustin Hoffman appeared as a favor. Barry called him up and asked, 'Would you come in for two weeks?' It was such a great help for the project, because a story in which the lead actors are four boys whom nobody knows is a hard sell today — especially if it's

Opposite: ***Bathed in melancholy source lighting, the young Shakes (Joseph Perrino) contemplates his grim future at the boys' reformatory.*** **This page:** ***To lend the school scenes an ominous feel, Ballhaus kept his images cool and dark, with bluish highlights and a great deal of contrast.***

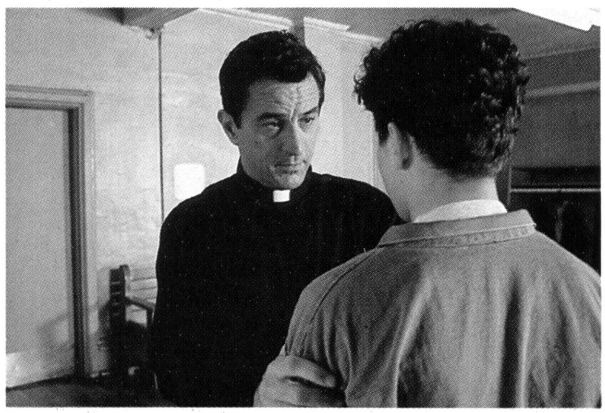
Clockwise from near right: ***The four youths watch in dismay as their mischievous prank takes a sickening turn; Ballhaus assesses the light from a New York rooftop; a concerned priest (Robert De Niro) counsels one of his troubled charges.***

not an action movie or a love story. But stars like Dustin, Robert De Niro, Brad Pitt, Kevin Bacon and Jason Patric helped to get the picture off the ground."

Ballhaus recalls that he and Levinson discussed photographic style at length. "We wanted a different style for each act," the cinematographer explains. "The first takes place in Hell's Kitchen, and we decided it should have a warm look because the kids are growing up there and they're safe. Even if there's trouble at home — one boy's father beats his mother — they have wonderful friendships, and for them it's a great time. It's secure and warm and they're protected. It's all controlled by the Mafia, but it's controlled. We used long lenses to make [the neighborhood] kind of pretty and exciting.

"For the second act, in the reform school, we went in the other direction," Ballhaus continues. "From the outside, the place looks perfectly wonderful, like a university campus, but we find out that for these boys inside, it's a living hell. We wanted a cool, dark look — not friendly or warm. There's not one yellow or warm scene inside the school. It's all bluish and contrasty, and we used a lot of short lenses.

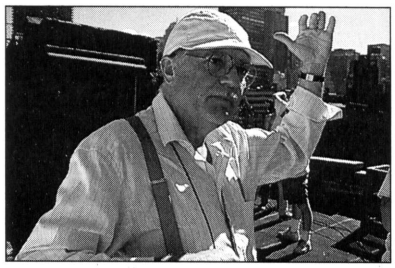
"We wanted the third act, which takes place 15 years later, to look more like real life, with neither the warmth of the first act nor the coldness of the second. The guys are grown up and now we see them in the real world."



The camera crew in New York consisted of crack professionals with whom Ballhaus has worked many times before. Jerry DeBlau was the gaffer, and Dennis Gamiello served as key grip. Ballhaus' son, Florian, who is a director of photography in Germany, was the operator.

The movie was filmed in Super 35. In this format, the original negative is photographed with spherical lenses at full-frame aperture, for an image that is 0.980" wide and 0.735" tall — a full four perforations. (The standard aperture is 0.864" x 0.630".) At the laboratory, the image is later anamorphosed (squeezed) so that prints can be projected through an anamorphic lens for widescreen presentation.

"The film will be released in 2:35:1," Ballhaus explains. "A lot of people ask me about the difference between shooting with anamorphic lenses and shooting in Super 35. I made a lot of tests for *The Age of Innocence* [see *AC* Oct. '93] to find out which was the better way. On that film, Martin Scorsese and I decided to go with Super 35 basically for one artistic reason, which is that whenever you shoot in 'scope and go to video later, you never have the original framing anymore. It's always panning and scanning. I do widescreen in Super 35 because more people see a movie on tape than they do in the theaters, so I feel obligated to make it look good on tape.



"If you shoot in Super 35, you have the option to open up the bottom; I shoot with a common top line so that we have a lot [of room] on the bottom. I keep that area clean, so that when we go to video we have something to go to. You can keep the top and the sides, which worked great for *Age of Innocence.* It wasn't compromised; it was almost the same composition, only we saw more on the bottom. Shooting in Super 35 also allows me to use my regular lenses, and a much wider range of them.

"You also have to use a lot more light in 'scope — at least an f5.6 to make a really crisp, sharp image and get some depth of field. I can shoot with an f2 [in Super 35] because the lenses are much faster, so I need less light and less time to light. I can even shoot the streets of New York City at night with available light. You can't do that in 'scope because the lenses are not fast enough. When [Stephen Burum, ASC] did *Mission Impos-*

sible, he shot a lot of night stuff on 5298 [Eastman's 500 ASA film] because he needed an f5.6. In Super 35, I can shoot the same thing at f2.8 with [200 ASA] 5293. This compensates for the next-generation optical squeeze that's necessary when you shoot Super 35."

As a result of this choice, Ballhaus shot most of *Sleepers* on Eastman 5293, using 5245 for day exteriors. "When shooting Super 35 I try not to shoot much 5298," he says. "I did a lot of the night shots with 5293 just to have less grain, so we had to light many scenes instead of using available light."

There were exceptions to this strategy, however. Assessing one Act Three night sequence shot on location in New York City, Ballhaus recalls, "Two of the grown boys walk into a bar, and we shot with 98 in available light because we had Broadway behind them — and we couldn't light that. [For another scene], shot under the elevated subway tracks, we shot 98 and we needed a lot of big lights on the roofs. We used a 12K HMI for moonlight, softened with a big 6' by 6' silk in front, but it was basically all lit. We owned the street, which was great because we could do whatever we wanted there. It was a lot of work to light all that, but it worked quite well."

He continues, "We had very interesting locations and permission to completely change one street to make it look like it would have in the late Sixties. They put a lot of money into that location and did a wonderful job on the neighborhood — dressing the shops, putting fire escapes on the walls, and so on. Our production designer, Kristi Zea, did a marvelous job. Most of the people there liked the activity going on in their neighborhood, and they got little jobs and made some money. There was great atmosphere on that street."

The film's opening scene is an eye-grabber. The camera looks straight down at the four boys sunbathing on a roof, then descends four stories to show the hectic pace of life on the shadowy streets of Hell's Kitchen.

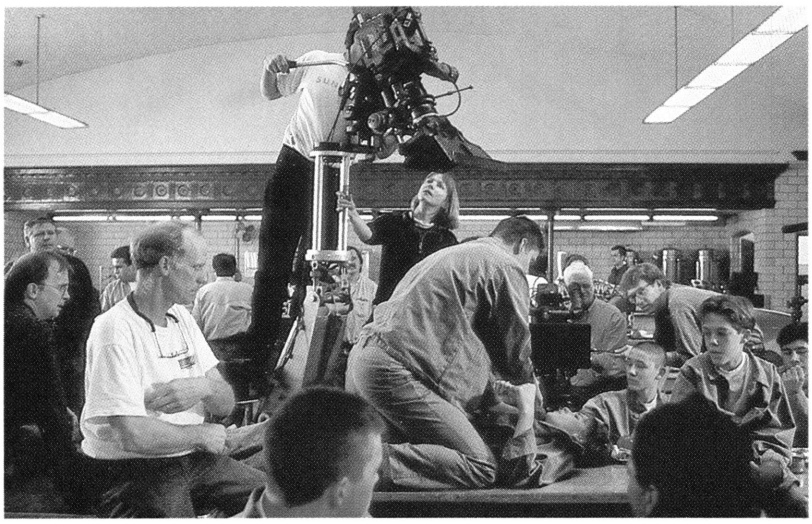
"That shot was made with the Akela crane," Ballhaus explains. "The crane was originally made in Russia, and then the company modified it here; they now have three or four of them. It extends to 75 feet. From the fourth floor of the building, where the kids were, we swooped around over the edge and down into the street and around into another street. I kept the same aperture throughout the shot. We tried to fill the shadows a little with a couple of big reflectors; they were about two stops under, but I didn't want to open up, because it gets so bright and I wanted the quality of the dark street."

Capturing the Big Apple's authenticity was vital. "We wanted the feeling that it *is* Hell's Kitchen; as a result, scenes in which you could see the skyline were shot in Manhattan," says the cinematographer. "People who know New York will be able to tell that we really shot it there. The rooftop where the boys played was really in the middle of Hell's Kitchen. The other streets were actually shot in Queens because we couldn't close off the streets in Manhattan, but the look was the same."

In many of the Hell's Kitchen scenes, well-known Manhattan landmarks — the Empire State and Chrysler buildings, for example — can be seen in the dis-

Ballhaus prepares to add one of his signature touches — a circular dolly move — to the film's stickball sequence.

Right, top: ***The crew angles the camera to capture an overhead view of a fistfight in the reformatory's lunchroom.*** **Bottom:** ***Scenes in which the boys are tortured by guards were sketched out with suggestive lighting to avoid the rendering of lurid details.***



tance, adding to the authentic feel. But Ballhaus felt that many of the best locations were in the Queens neighborhood: "We shot a scene there in which two thugs try to rob a boy carrying racket money in a dark passageway between houses. It was really dark in there, and to get some light — not too much — I had some 12Ks along the sides. You could see the walls with a nice backlight; to keep the dark alley feeling, I used very little fill."

Weather, the natural enemy of location filming, turned a benign face on the *Sleepers* company, and the filmmakers made the most of the one vicissitude they encountered. "We were very lucky," Ballhaus admits. "We started in New York in summer, and when we finished we were at the reform-school location in Connecticut. We needed to create the feeling of autumn and a bit of winter there, and sure enough, one day it started snowing. [The snow] was not in the script, but we just said, 'Okay, it's snowing and we need that.' We invented something quickly, and then raced out [to make use of] the snow."

Confronted with good weather on the rest of the shoot, the company made their own rain for several NYC street scenes. Ballhaus notes, "The one in which the two friends are walking under the L tracks was done in Brooklyn with big rain towers. The rushing trains became a motif for the city, and the noise worked quite well along with the time of day when they meet."

For daylight scenes, Ballhaus used a lot of fill due to the extreme brightness of the sun. To soften things, he utilized a Tiffen Soft-Con filter and a 12' x 12' frame of bleached muslin — which he would either use for bounce (with the sun aiming into it for backlit shots) or diffusion (often with two 12Ks shooting through it). For some scenes, such as a key sequence in which the boys torment a hot dog vendor, Ballhaus had a huge silk hung from above to soften the light.

"We also used filters, especially in the first act, to get the softness of the colors [of the period], so it wouldn't have the look of modern New York," says Ballhaus. "In addition to my Soft-Con filters, I used a Tiffen black net to make everything a little softer and friendlier. Whenever it was too bright, I used ND6s and ND9s to bring the f-stop down. In daylight, I always tried to keep the exposure around f4 or 5.6."

In one eerie sequence, a Mafia leader informs a black gang boss named Little Caesar that the latter's younger brother, the football player who had supposedly died of natural causes in the reform school, had actually been beaten to death by a guard who was now a dope pusher in the neighborhood. The gangster and his cronies later take the killer for an evening ride and execute him next to an airport runway.

"I wanted Little Caesar's headquarters to be a very special location," Ballhaus recalls, "and I explained to [production designer] Kristi Zea that we shouldn't shoot it in some ordinary room. We looked at a lot of locations and none were quite right, until we finally found an old movie palace in Brooklyn. We walked in there and I said, 'This is the place!' It wasn't realistic, but sometimes a movie has its own reality. I like moments when you heighten that sense with a place that just *looks* great. He *could* live in an old movie theater, so why not?

"Little Caesar shoots the guard at the airport just as an airplane comes into the shot," Ballhaus adds. "A lot of people might think that [the plane] was a CGI effect, but it was a real plane that came down and we shot it in the last moment of daylight. We knew that if we got lucky, there

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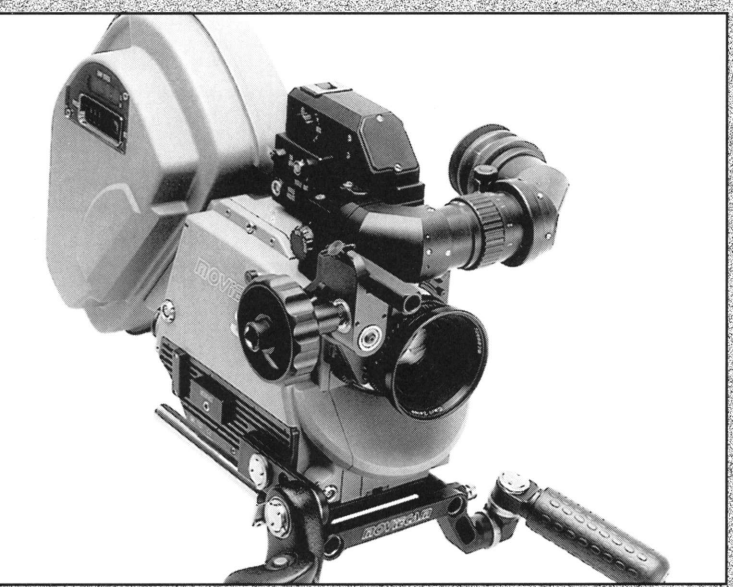

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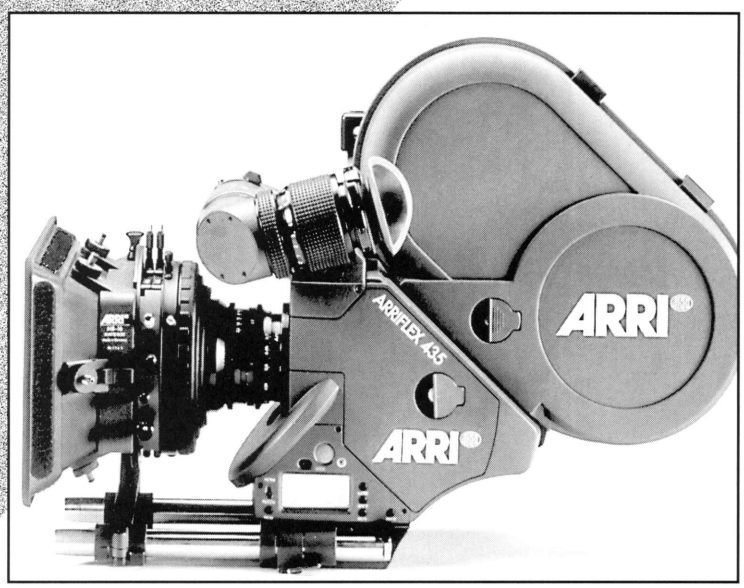

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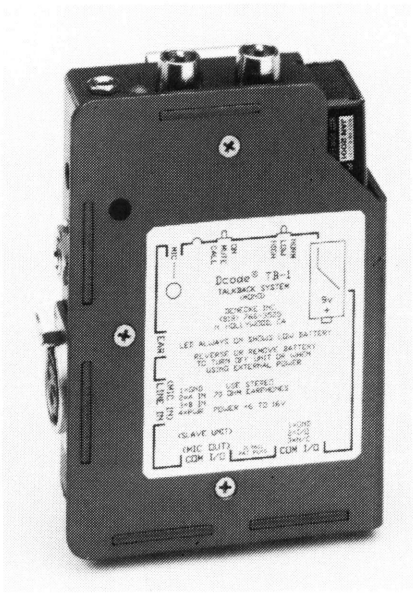

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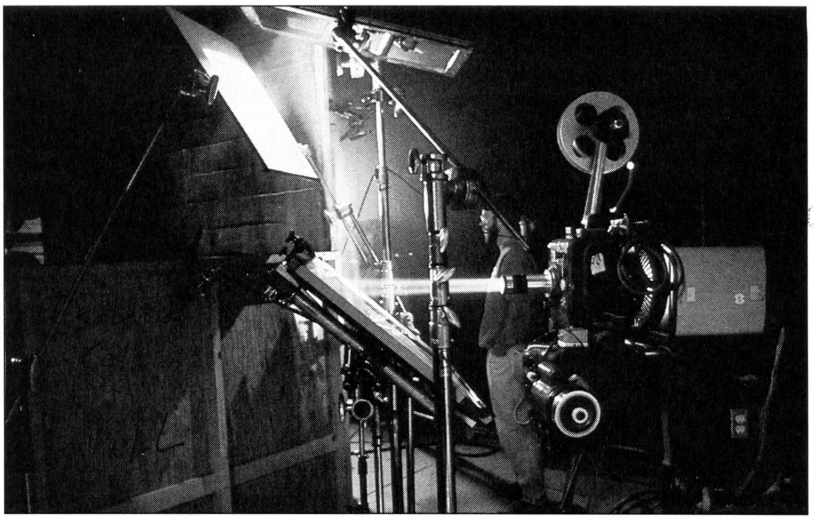

Projected images were used to artistic effect for a scene in which Shakes, alone in his cell, recalls a happy childhood moment with his friends, which comes to life on the palm of his hand. A scene of the four boys cavorting was reflected onto actor Joseph Perrino's hand via the setup shown here; in the film, the hand shot serves as a segue into a full-screen rendering of the projected sequence.

would be a plane; if not, we could always add it in later with CGI. The shot was well-prepared; we lit it, waited until the light was right, and shot several takes. Then all of a sudden, Barry said, 'Oh my gosh, here comes a big plane — let's go!' It was perfect timing and quite dramatic, shooting this guy as the plane was coming down. We added the landing lights on the actors so that they could be seen shortly before the plane came in. We had a little backlight, but we filmed it basically with very little light. The whole scene took about an hour to shoot."

The reform-school location was actually a facility for the mentally disabled near Newtown, Connecticut. "It's a big compound, but most of the buildings are empty, with only one or two buildings still busy," Ballhaus reveals. "The location was perfect for us: it had the right architecture and we had freedom to move in and out of the buildings. The only set we actually built was the cell where the guards imprison one boy. We couldn't find a space like that anywhere. All of the other places, such as the basement where the guards take the inmates and the long hallway leading to it, were real."

In one nightmarish but bravura moment, the camera hurtles down the long, blindingly bright basement corridor that leads to the torture room. "That was a complicated shot," Ballhaus relates. "We did it with a Steadicam on a dolly and we changed speed from 24 fps to three fps, which created the 'racing' effect. But when you shoot at three frames, the camera has to be really steady — otherwise it jiggles around like crazy because of the exposure time. Larry McConkey was our Steadicam operator; I always use him when I'm shooting in New York. We lit the corridor with a strong source so it would go white at the end."

Ballhaus is proud of his son's expertise in the handheld scenes, noting, "Florian always got the right feel for when to move the camera, especially in all of the flashbacks in the room where the guards torment of the boys. When you're doing handheld stuff, it's all about intuition and having a feel for the scene."

Arriflex cameras were used throughout the production. "We shot a lot of the handheld stuff with the new 435," reports Ballhaus. "It's a brand-new camera, and it's beautifully designed. It's light and incredibly steady, and it goes up to 150 fps.

"Arri's Variable Primes, made by Zeiss, are also interesting tools," Ballhaus reports. "The three lenses cover the whole range from 16 to 105mm, and are very sharp.

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Warm, sourcey lighting enhances the fraternal mood as the grown "sleepers" stage a reunion.

They start from 16 to 35mm, then go from 32 to 65mm, and 65 to 105mm. These zooms are very fast; they open up to f.2, and they're almost better than the primes. It's not too often that you use the whole range of a zoom, but sometimes you just want a little motion in [the shot], and these lenses are perfect for that. With regular zooms you always need at least an f4, but with these lenses you can shoot at f2. We worked in many low-light situations, such as on a subway, which we couldn't light."

Subtle overcranking was used in several scenes. Ballhaus especially liked the sequence at the beginning of Act Three in which two of the grown "sleepers" accidentally encounter one of their former reform school antagonists in a restaurant. In a moment of fate, one of the men goes back to the restroom and sees the ex-guard eating alone in a booth. "We did a speed change from 24 to 50 fps to make this moment of recognition a little bigger," Ballhaus says.

The 435 ES's electronic mirror shutter can be continuously adjusted from 11.2° to 180° while the camera is running to compensate for such speed changes.

The cameraman continues, "Later, at the moment when [the adult "sleeper"] turns, we shot at 30 fps. We shot at 30 fps again when he's in the men's room and looks up into the mirror, to heighten the moment when he realizes that he's found the man who destroyed his life. You can see in his eyes that he has to kill him."

Referring to another slow-motion scene, Ballhaus say, "In the school, when the guards beat one boy and throw him into a dark cell, we shot at 120 fps. The whole sequence is intercut with shots of the football game that had just been won by the boys. This was a stylistically interesting way of telling the story. Barry was struggling with how to present the football game. Finally, he said, 'I think it's best to do it as a flashback from the point of view of the boy in the cell, with him remembering what happened.' That gave us the freedom to do wild things, which I enjoyed. We shot it handheld in black-and-white, which added a lot of drive to the story."

All of the black-and-white flashbacks were actually shot on monochromatic stock, though Ballhaus points out one exception: "It's a scene during the trial, when one of the guards, Ferguson, is on the stand. We see a flashback in which he comes into one of the boys' rooms and tells him, 'I just f——d your friend.' Then the boy he has just raped comes in and puts a knife to his throat. That scene was originally shot in color as a regular scene. But Barry decided in the editing that he wanted to make the moment of Ferguson's breakdown in the courtroom more dramatic by intercutting the scene as a flashback. So we projected the color footage, and Florian shot it in black-and-white off the screen, making handheld moves on the image. That is what was cut into the courtroom scene."

Overall, Ballhaus "tried to give the courtroom itself a rich and dark look, with a bluish light in the background and a warmer light on the actors. I used a lot of smoke in general to give it a bit of atmosphere and bring out the beams of light coming in."

Obviously pleased with the outcome of his collaboration with Levinson, Ballhaus recalls with a grin, "*Sleepers* was a picture full of challenges, but it was a dream to do. It went fairly smoothly, and we came in ahead of schedule and under budget." ◆

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Mining the Macabre

X-Files creator Chris Carter, director David Nutter and cinematographer Peter Wunstorf set out to shock television audiences with *Millennium*.

by Christopher Probst

Fresh from his resounding success with the paranormal-shock series *The X-Files*, writer/executive producer Chris Carter is determined to push the boundaries of prime-time television's sensibilities even further into uncharted territory with his new show, *Millennium*. "On *The X-Files*, we pushed the limits of darkness, mood and storytelling using the camera, and I wanted to continue to do that with *Millennium*," Carter reveals. "In this [paranormal] genre, there's a tendency to go with surreal lighting techniques: macabre, high-key, glowing stuff. But I wanted the new show to be as real as possible, to create natural lighting situations — no fake sources — while keeping it good, dark and cinematic."

Millennium trails ex-FBI Agent Frank Black (played by Lance Henriksen), an ace profiler of serial killers who attempts to escape the stress of his job by relocating to a Seattle suburb with his wife, Catherine (Megan Gallagher), and their young daughter. But Black soon discovers that he cannot run away from his uncanny insights into the homicidal mind, which enable him to "see" killers' actions and hunt them down.

Toward that end, Black joins a clandestine assemblage of former law enforcement officers known as the Millennium Group, who have taken it upon themselves to rid the world of the ever-increasing psychopathic population as the year 2000 — the new millennium — rapidly approaches.

The *Millennium* pilot was shot on a scant 16-day schedule in Vancouver, British Columbia, where Carter also maintains a

Serial killer hunter Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) examines the handiwork of the "Frenchman" in the shadowy, eerily lit morgue set. Says cinematographer Peter Wunstorf, "We shot two sequences in the morgue — a daytime setup, and a nighttime scene. For the night look at the end of the pilot, I didn't turn all of the fluorescents on; it's much sketchier lighting. We had all of the fixtures wired up, so it was just a matter of switching them on and off until we got the right balance."

Photos by Doane Gregory, courtesy of Fox Broadcasting Company.

base for the continuing production of *The X-Files*. With a wealth of resources and expert Canadian crews at his disposal, Carter sought once again to utilize the city's chameleon-like locales, enlisting the aid of several *X-Files* veterans for *Millennium*. First on board was director David Nutter, who has worked with Carter on *The X-Files* since its first season and directed 15 episodes of the show.

Inspired by such psychological thrillers as *Angel Heart*, *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Seven*, Carter and Nutter set out to find a cinematographer with a fresh eye and the ability to render a look never before seen on television. Their intense quest for candidates led to Edmonton, Alberta-based director of photography Peter Wunstorf. "David made a long list of people he wanted to work with, and I learned a long time ago that you always start at the top," explains Carter. "Peter was recommended to us by Paul Sarossy, CSC, whom we also pursued but was not available. Peter is a true artist. The way I perceive him is that he is willing to wait for interesting projects to come along. This one happened to appeal to him. I think he made his choice to work on the project after reading the script, meeting with us and hearing what we wanted to accomplish."

Wunstorf had known that he wanted to work in films since the age of 12, when he saw Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, the infamous tale of futuristic cruelty photographed by John Alcott, BSC. Wunstorf experimented by shooting on Super 8, and after graduating from high school he landed a job at a local television station in the town of Red Deer. Soon enough, he moved on to the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), where he got daily camera experience shooting 16mm news footage on color reversal film. After a three-year stay as a television cameraman, he elected to move into the realm of freelance camerawork, assisting on features filming in the area and shooting any assignments he could find.

A strip-club dancer (appropriately named Calamity) is appraised as a victim by the twisted literary aficionado/serial killer, seen holding up doomsday predictions scribbled in French on the peep-booth glass. In regard to the risqué nature of the scene, director David Nutter offers, "I thought* Millennium *was a real test in restraint and not overdoing anything. I wanted to achieve the same caliber and quality of* The X-Files, *while giving this show a strong 'feature' look and feel."

Wunstorf first gained recognition as a director of photography for his work on the low-budget, black-and-white feature *The Grocer's Wife*, which was selected to open Critics Week at the Cannes Film Festival. He earned a nomination for a Genie Award (Canada's equivalent of the Oscar) for his subsequent film, *Double Happiness*. His other credits include the films *The Michelle Apartments* and *Road to Saddle River*.

> "I think people are imagining that *Millenium* is going to be a 'serial-killer-of-the-week' show, which it isn't. With this series I really want to explore the problems with culture and society, the nature of evil, [and] the nature of goodness, heroism and spirituality."
>
> — series creator Chris Carter

In discussing the look of *Millennium*, Carter, Nutter, Wunstorf and production designer Gary Wissner — who incidentally was the art director on *Seven* — referenced not only Darius Khondji, AFC's eerie illumination of that film and Michael Seresin's harrowing visuals in *Angel Heart*, but other select films that contained a certain starkness and drained color palette. Among these titles, Wunstorf cites Barry Sonnenfeld's lush photography in the gangster period piece *Miller's Crossing*, as well as Roger Deakins, ASC's monochrome patina in *The Shawshank Redemption* as being influential. Additionally, the filmmakers also pored over volumes of books, including the works of photographers Robert Frank and Joel-Peter Witkin (particularly Witkin's compilation of crime scene photography, entitled *In Harm's Way*).

Says Wunstorf, "Chris Carter is very visual *and* very demanding. He was also very much in on the overall visual design of the series. Both he and David Nutter wanted the show to have a sort of desaturated, monochromatic look, but at the same time

Above: ***Operator Rod Pridy dons a Steadicam equipped with a Moviecam Compact for a shot at the peep show palace.***
Right: ***Director of photography Peter Wunstorf eyeballs a setup.***

they wanted to lend it the burnt-out feel of an old photograph."

Nutter expands, "The idea was that this character, Frank Black, has moved to Seattle to provide his family with a home. This is a home that he in a sense creates... even in an artificial manner. For example, he's had the house painted yellow over the old colors to give it new freshness. There needed to be a sense of warmth and richness there. I think that the people in this world who cherish the home and the simple pleasures are the people who actually go out and know what the term 'hell on Earth' means — they've seen hell on Earth."

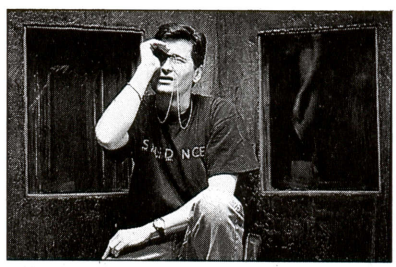
"When I was hired," recounts Wunstorf, "Gary Wissner and David had been already been talking about a motif for the show, which was a sort of heaven-and-hell concept, with heaven being Frank's home life and hell being the other locations: the strip club, the cruising areas and the forest. The police station and morgue sets represented more of a sort of gray zone. That idea was then reflected in the art direction and the lighting. When Frank is at home with his family in their new yellow house, things are safe, bright, warm and cheery. But when we get outside of that, it's usually pretty dark, it's raining and there's a lot of contrast — whether it's day or night."

Several methods were examined to achieve the desaturated, monochromatic look that the producers desired. Darius Khondji, dramatic use of the CCE re-silvering process on the release prints of *Seven* [see *AC* Oct. '95] yielded fantastic results with dense blacks and a muted tonal range of color. But since *Millennium* would be finishing in the electronic-video presentation realm, this technique couldn't be incorporated.

"Before we did anything," details Wunstorf, "we sat down with everyone involved in the visual end of this film, made them read the script, and then showed them the photos and film clips from which we were drawing inspiration. I also showed them my reel and talked about [which footage] on my reel might apply and which might not.

"We then did tests at the telecine-transfer stage to see how we could pull color out — how to get a sort of desaturated look on film without going too far and making it black-and-white. We experimented with crushing the blacks, pulling the color out and adjusting the contrast. We also tested transferring straight across and doing the manipulating in the tape-to-tape stage. We tried all of the different combinations between the two stages."

Adds Nutter, "Establishing the look early on was also very important to us, because when you're doing a pilot, the look of the dailies is vitally important. The dailies have to look as close to how you intend the finished product to look as possible, because the studio executives are all inspecting them or asking how they look. I spent a lot of a time with the people at Gastown Labs in Vancouver, and



was able to grab hold of Martin Wells, who was the chief color timer on *The X-Files*."

Wunstorf elaborates, "We involved Martin very heavily because the challenge with doing television, where you're dealing with neg-to-tape transfer, is that there's no such thing as a one-light transfer. But because we wanted our dailies to look as good as possible — and because Martin knew exactly what we wanted to be doing during the transfer — he actually did most of manipulation himself, although he didn't take all of the color out. We didn't want to leave it all to the tape-to-tape correction. So what you end up seeing in the pilot is pretty much what the dailies looked like."

Setting the tone from moment one, *Millennium*'s pilot opens within the seedy bowels of a run-down Seattle strip club. "Since this scene was the opening

'teaser' segment for the pilot, they really wanted it to kick," recalls Wunstorf. "We decided that this place had to be a very sleazy, grimy place, and David wanted the club to feel very small, claustrophobic and practical, with very low ceilings. We wanted the women there to really stand out, so the walls were painted this sort of dark, awful, gaudy purple [which became a muted graytone after the final telecine coloring]. Gary Wissner and the art department ran fluorescent fixtures down the ceilings and my gaffer, Chris Meakes, and keygrip, Nick Kuchera, then either gelled the tubes different colors, turned one bulb off, or just threw one tube off-color with a slight green gel; we didn't want it looking too neat or to start feeling like a set. When you go into an actual old building, you'll find many different types of fluorescents, and some of them are going off-color. To the eye, one may look normal, but then another may look orange or green. It's those little touches that add a bit of realism. You have to sort of throw things out of whack — sometimes by mistake — when you think, 'Well, things are looking a little too perfect here, what's wrong with this picture?' If you actually went to this place as a real location, chances are that all the lights wouldn't be working."

Viewers are led into the decaying interior of the strip club by a shadowy figure — nicknamed the Frenchman by the strippers because of his penchant for holding notes scribbled in French up against the windows of the glass booths — and follow the man on Steadicam as he burrows through the labyrinthine corridors of the dilapidated den of debauchery. After he offers one of the club's performers, Calamity, a large sum of money for a private dance, we watch with voyeuristic curiosity as the Frenchman gazes at her from a dark, cramped and sordid viewing booth. As she begins to sway, the beat of the music intensifies and the Frenchman begins to recite apocalyptic passages from the Book of Revelations, along with Nostradamus' futurecasts and the poems of William Butler Yeats, as he slips into a psychotic vision of the stripper's impending death.

The Frenchman is clearly a prime candidate for the Millennium Group's brand of philanthropy. "As he watches the stripper in the booth," Wunstorf relates, "blood begins to drip down the walls. Then the stripper starts bleeding, and she is eventually engulfed in flames. It's quite unnerving material to watch."

Designed as the first of several "vision" sequences, a substantial portion of the Frenchman's demented point of view was shot with a 16mm Arriflex SR camera using Eastman 7240 and 7250 Ektachrome color reversal stocks. This would visually distinguish it from the main narrative material, which was photographed on 35mm with an Arriflex 535A for A-camera coverage, BL 4s for B-camera angles (under the eye of Greg Middleton), and a Moviecam Compact for Steadicam shots.

Wunstorf chose Eastman Kodak EXR 5293 for day exterior

Police search a forest for victims that the Frenchman has buried alive. For exterior nighttime sequences involving flashlights, Wunstorf elected to put the opposite correction — ½ CTB and ¼ minus green gels — on the boosted flashlights, rather than lose light output from the HMIs illuminating the area. (Note: Photograph is not corrected back.) "Because we were using smoke, some of the footage was coming up a bit thin," Wunstorf expands. "You have to be really careful when using smoke at night because it's actually giving you a lot of exposure. But if the smoke starts to clear out during the shot, you lose some of that exposure and end up a bit thinner on the negative."

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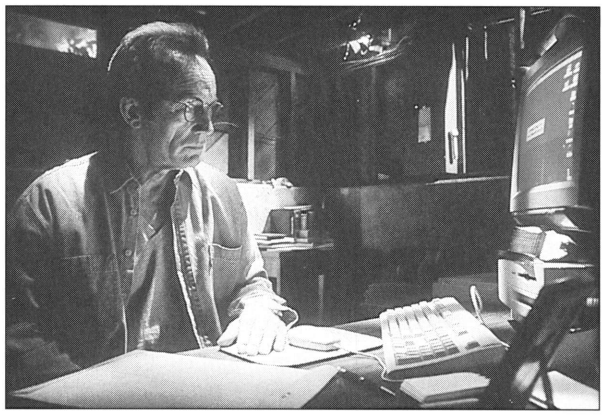

Left top: ***Frank Black's basement was in many ways even more complex for Wunstorf to light than some larger settings — he utilized over a half dozen Dedolights and inkies for these scenes, while night exteriors were often lit with just two fixtures.***
Bottom: ***Director David Nutter on set with his actors.***

and interiors and 5298 for the nighttime interior and exteriors — although he did utilize the 500 ASA stock pushed one stop to 1000 ASA for certain low-light exterior sequences.

Says Wunstorf about shooting the sequence, "The private dance was shot in two different booths. On the first day we shot the Frenchman's and Calamity's angles — basically his point of view of her and her dialogue, pre-blood and pre-fire. Then on the last day of principal photography, we had another 'special' booth built over a tank. We recreated the lighting, but the set walls had this membrane material through which the special effects people could pump blood. We then spent an evening shooting the continuation of the peep-show sequence. The first stage was blood coming through the walls. Stage two had the blood pouring down the walls and blood running down her face and coming out of her hair, to the point where everything starts bleeding. The third stage was the fire. There we had the actual actress, in blood, dancing against the back wall in flames. That wall gets so hot and bright that the exposure increases two to three stops and basically washes out the film."

Says Nutter, "One of the things that Chris Carter has instilled in me is that point of view is so very important. You always have to ask, 'Who are you with in this scene? Who's important in

here? What are we trying to say?' Rather than just sitting back observing the event, I think the camera should be a part of the characters. We need to experience and care as much as the characters do. We're trying to make the camera invisible, and yet at the same time get into the characters' heads and feel what they're feeling. Given that, the first person that I asked for when I got the job was our camera operator, Rod Pridy, with whom I had worked very closely on *The X-Files*. He and I are able to talk in shorthand, and I always know that once Rod has [a scene] in his head and understands what I mean, it'll be that way and better. And that's something you can't buy."

In following the pilot's harrowing opening sequence, the filmmakers chose to contrast the seamy world of the Frenchman with Frank Black's more soothing home life. "[The scenes at Frank's home] used a more classic approach in the sense that I wanted to give the audience a sense of uneasiness in other areas in the show," says Nutter. "I think it was important that we provide a very beautiful setting that had all

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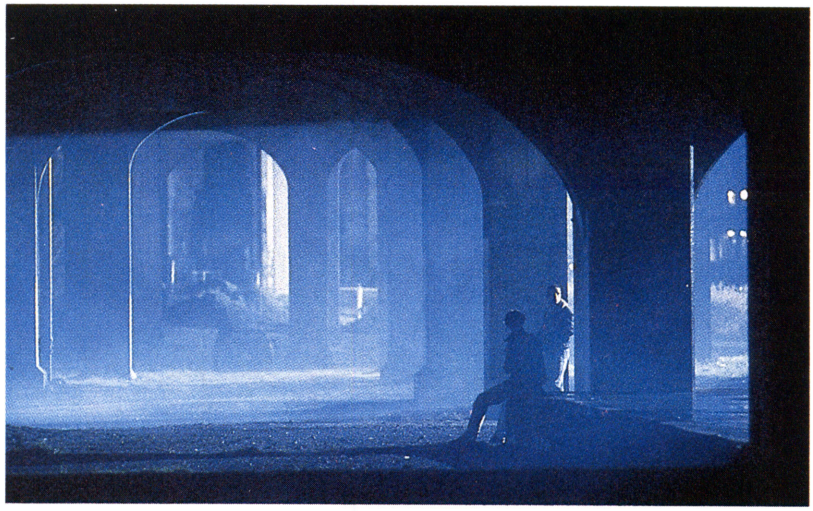


One of the "cruising areas" where the Frenchman lures his victims to their doom.

of the things Frank is striving for, with very sensible, understated camerawork that doesn't get in the way of what's happening, but tells the story in the best possible fashion."

Carter adds, "When we go to the house, we want the photography to help create the feeling of a safe place. So you don't want the camera circling or whip-panning. You want all of the moves to be as normal and as comforting as possible — as opposed to, for example, a scene in which [investigators] go out into a field and find a burnt body. In that sequence, the camera is very energized. We are constantly trying to create a compression of events and images throughout the piece, but I think we go to a bit of decompression during scenes involving Frank's house and his normal life. That's where you want to air things out."

Wunstorf point out, "From a lighting point of view, even though we wanted these worlds to look different, we didn't want them to look as if they were in two different movies. There has to be a common thread — in this case, a lighting thread. A lot of the home life feel was created in the art direction and with less contrast in the lighting.

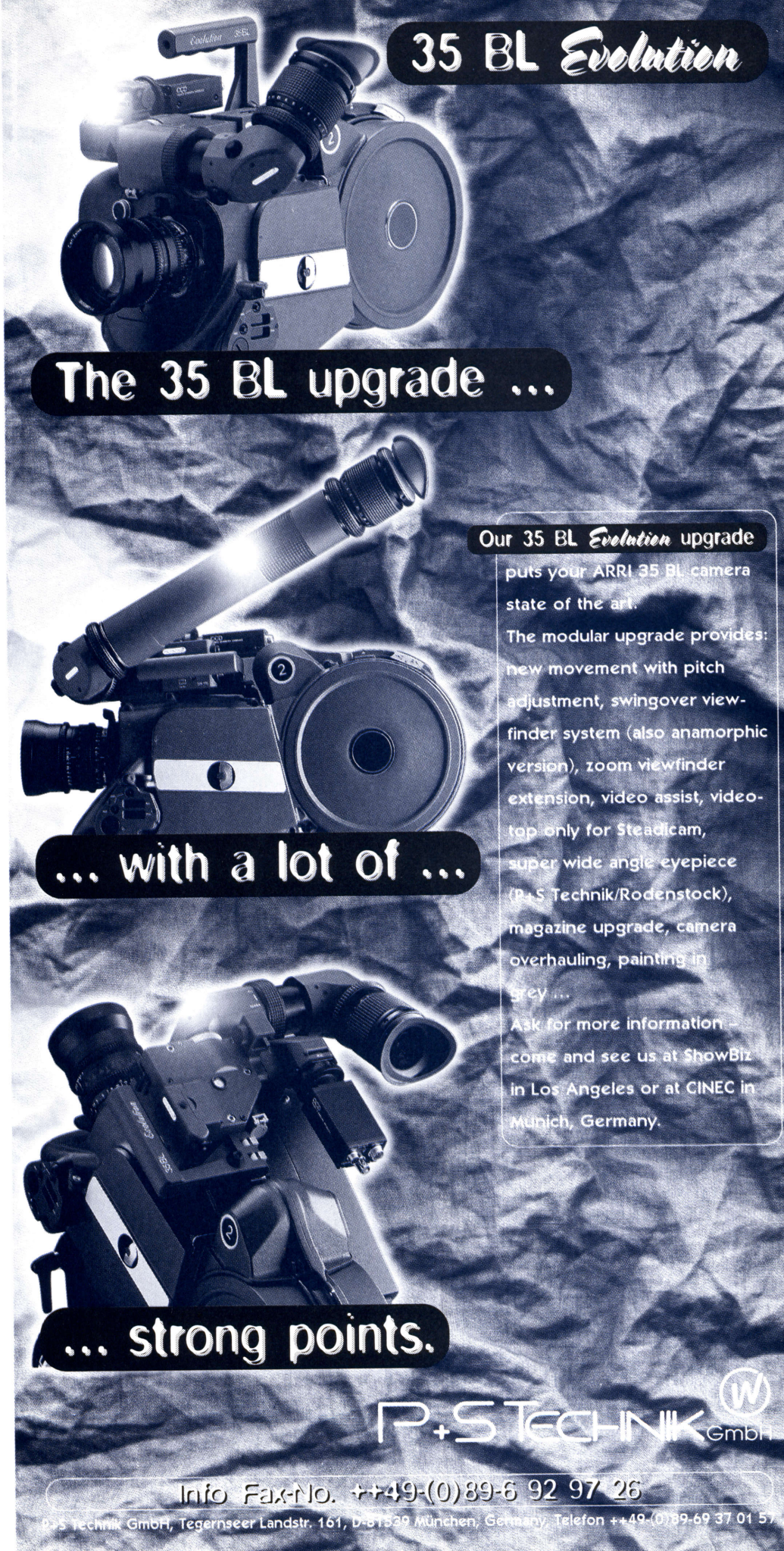
"The home was a practical location that we lit basically, creating our own daylight. Even though the house had southern exposure and the sun was generally shining, it was coming in at such a high angle that we couldn't use it. So we had 12K HMIs on Condors positioned at each end of the house [depending on which side we were shooting on].

"When Frank and Catherine first move into their new home, there's a moment when they hug upstairs. There's some patterned stained-glass along the edges of the windows that the sun is starting to hit. Now, that sunlight isn't really encroaching on the scene — we still have the HMIs coming in to light the actors — but the light is hitting these little diamonds of stained glass on the windows and is throwing patterns on the actors. It was one of those accidents that ended up looking very natural. So we then established that light later in a wide shot. We could have taken the time to block out the sun, but we just went with it and it actually added to what we were doing."

The visual contrast between Frank's home life and the Frenchman's homicidal rampage is linked by "gray-zone" scenes taking place either at the police station and morgue sets or exteriors around the city.

Recalls Wunstorf, "When you compare the scenes in the house with Frank's little girl to, say, a scene in the forest where they're digging up a guy who has been buried alive with his eyes sewn shut, even though we're using the same lighting tools, the subject matter is very different. The home and exteriors were practical locations. The rest were all sets: the strip club, the police station and the morgue. The sets weren't even built in a proper studio, but in an old, empty building. The morgue set was actually built into its basement, so you could really call that a location dressed to be a morgue. The police station, the strip club and Frank's basement were set up with flats, but we used the building's practical ceilings. We had heavy discussions about how these places should look and feel. The police station and the morgue were all lit with practical fluorescents and Kino Flos — which is the way we decided those places would be lit. However, on any shot in the morgue or police station, we'd usually have three of four other lights on stands just outside of frame, helping with the modeling or adding fill, and generally supplementing the overall lighting design. It's always nice to have more choices, and you're always better off practically lighting a set and having extra fixtures ready to go. It's a lot easier to turn them off than it is to start adding them in at the last minute."

As Frank uses his detecting skills and "sixth sense" to track down the Frenchman, coincidence lands him face to face with the killer in a public park rife with late-night prostitution, where the Frenchman procures his victims. "For our moonlight," recounts Wunstorf, "I didn't want to go with the standard HMI blue, so we added a half orange — taking the HMI back halfway to tungsten — and then some half-plus green gels. The combination of orange and green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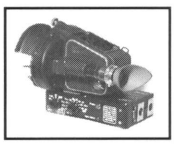

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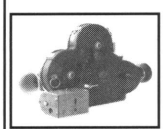

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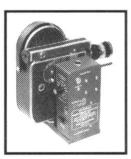

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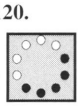

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on HMIs gives you a sort of blue-green moonlight, but there seems to be very little color in it. It's very monochromatic, and it becomes much more muted and mysterious."

As Black realizes that he's found the Frenchman, a frenetic foot-chase through the tangled bushes surrounding the park ensues. There, Wunstorf was faced with the logistical challenge of coordinating the lighting of a massive area, as well as choreographing the camera movement of the high-energy chase. "The chase sequence was shot at two different locations," says the cinematographer. "We had to light up a whole section of Stanley Park for the beginning of the chase — which was used as the cruising area — and on another night, when we had a Bee Bee light [with three 18K HMIs on board], we lit up a bridge for the end of the chase. But once they were off and running, we had to light very large areas. So in that case, rather than gelling the HMIs and losing some of the stop, I had the correction done in the transfer. I've done this before on features in printing — where you establish printer lights ahead of time — so that if you don't absolutely have to gel your moonlight, you end up getting a lot more output from your lights. However, this technique becomes a problem if you introduce other light sources such as flashlights into the shot. In the forest scene, where we had a team of police looking for bodies of people the Frenchman had buried alive, we could have done two things. We could have put our moonlight gel package — orange and green — onto our HMIs, our Bee Bee, and the fill. Or we could have put the reverse correction — pink and blue gels — on the flashlights. To me, the latter made a lot more sense, and it was more efficient to gel a few flashlights than to start gelling the HMIs.

"We shot the entire chase with 5298 pushed one stop," he expands. "We were generally shooting at a T2, which was far better than not pushing and having to shoot the chase sequence wide open [at T1.3 on the Zeiss primes] because a lot of the chase was shot handheld by Rod Pridy on an ATV vehicle. We always followed the Frenchman and led on Frank. It's a very subjective chase scene, and that point of view was something Chris and David really wanted. Given that, if we were shooting in a certain direction and chasing the Frenchman into the Bee Bee for backlight, we would then do the reverse and lead on Frank, using the same lighting setup."

> "When you compare the scenes in the house with Frank's little girl to, say, a scene in the forest where they're digging up a guy who has been buried alive with his eyes sewn shut, even though we're using the same lighting tools, the subject matter is very different."
>
> — cinematographer Peter Wustorf

The chase sequence ends with Frank pursuing the Frenchman onto a bridge. "We used very little lighting on the bridge," recalls Wunstorf. "We were again shooting at 1000 ASA [5298 pushed one stop]. The bridge was actually fairly simply lit. We had the Bee Bee on the shoreline, lighting up the whole side of the structure, and the rest of the illumination was provided by the sodium-vapor lamps that were already there.

"The challenge of that scene," he adds, "involved the moment when Frank realizes that he's lost the Frenchman, and someone says that the killer has jumped. The script states that Frank looks over the edge and

down into the water, with the camera then craning down to reveal the Frenchman hanging underneath the bridge. We placed an Enlouva crane with a Hot Head on a platform on the bridge to do the crane-down shot. The camera was armed out maybe 15 feet from the bridge, and then the arm dropped to reveal the Frenchman. We were on a 50mm lens at a T2, so focus became very critical. But there was no way for our focus puller, Jun Hosoi, to measure it because our camera was floating out in space!"

For producer Carter, simply telling a story with a series of master shots, medium shots and close-ups is not sufficient. "I don't like shooting that way at all," he scoffs. "It's boring and pedestrian to me. We have to keep the camera in motion, but it has to be driven there — not just functioning as if it has a mind of its own. If the camera is functioning as a character, you'd better be able to justify it to me, or else I'm an unhappy producer. Our camera is not flying around creating energy that's not there. I think the energy that is in the story is very intense. In fact, people keep asking me, 'Is the [rest of the] series going to be this intense?' I think the intensity is inherent in the story, and the camera just helps to convey that."

Wunstorf concludes, "The effective aspect of *Millennium* is that it is more reality-based. Even though *The X-Files* is really scary, I find this show even more frightening because it seems real. These things do happen; it's not science-fiction. I give a lot of credit to Chris Carter and to John Bartley [CSC], who shot the last three seasons of *The X-Files*, for creating shows on television that are *that* dark and *that* bold. I think that *The X-Files*, and now *Millennium* [which will continue on with cinematographer John McLachlan], have paved the way for some new possibilities on television." ◆

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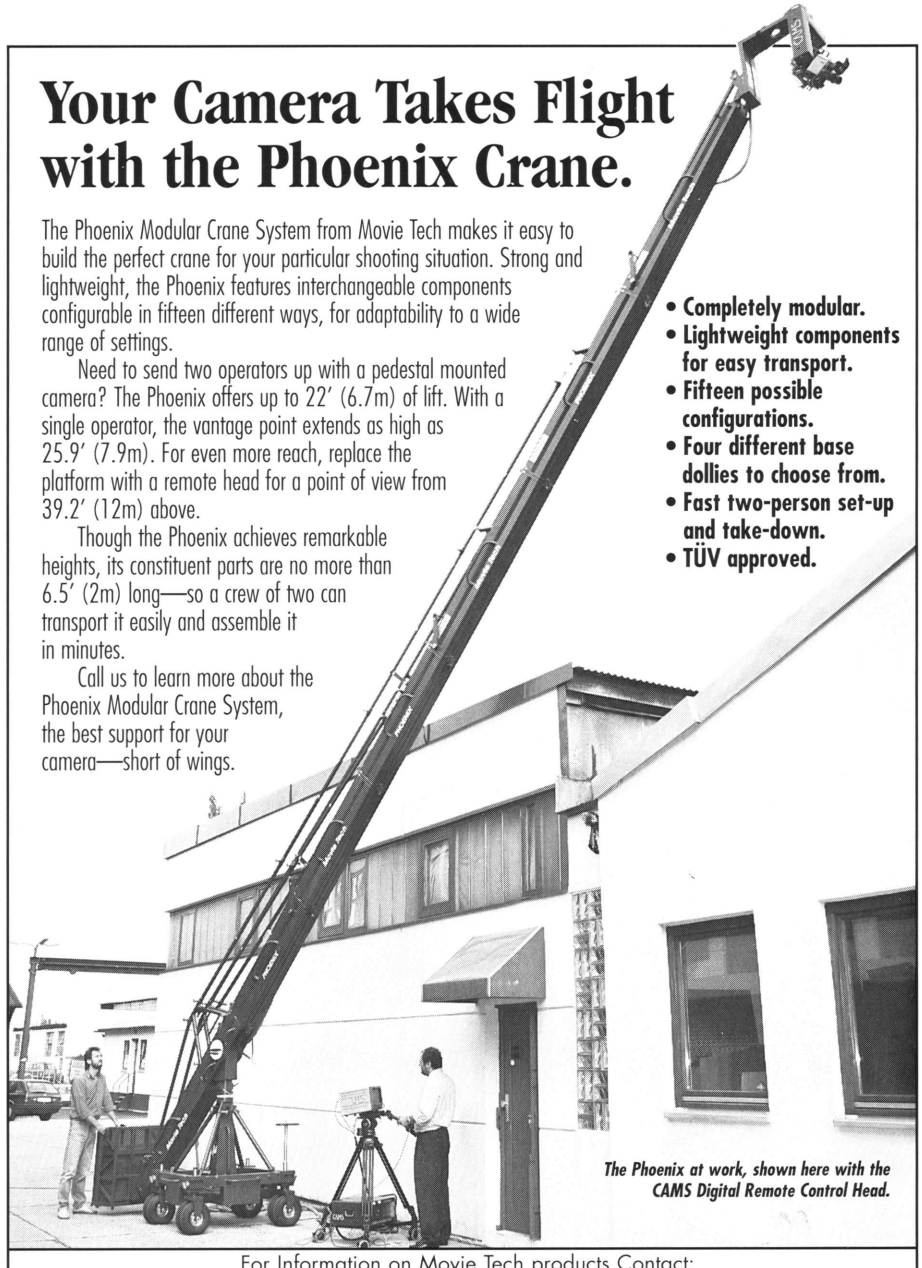

The Phoenix at work, shown here with the CAMS Digital Remote Control Head.

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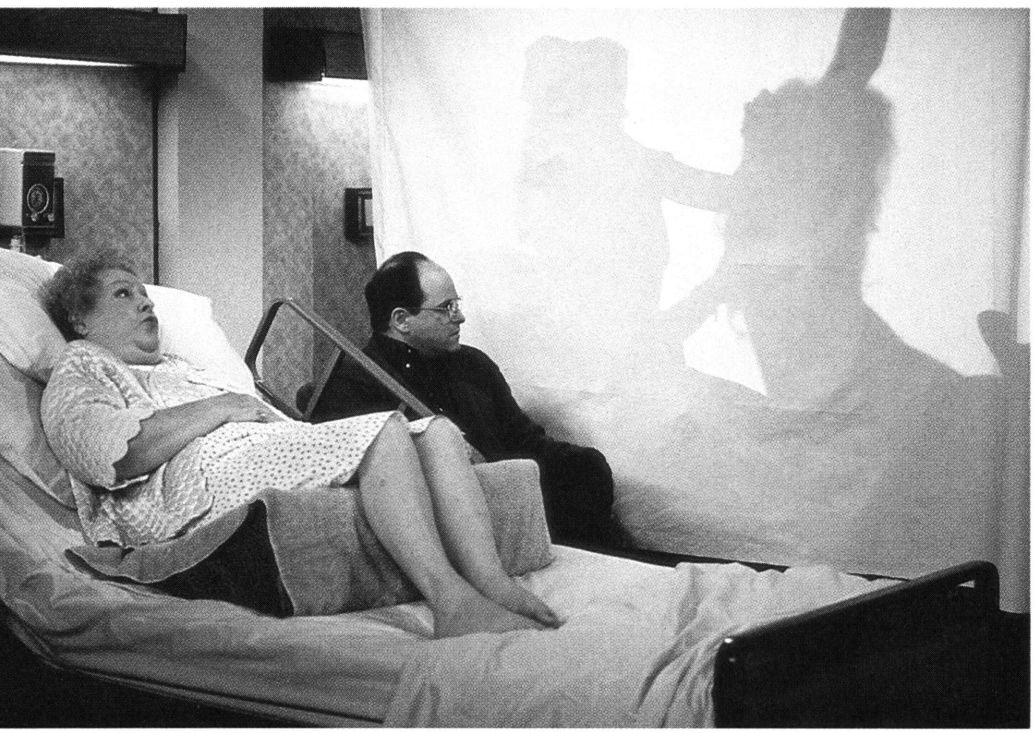

How to Photograph "Nothing"

Seinfeld cinematographer Wayne Kennan, ASC lends a variety of looks to television's top-rated comedy show.

by Chris Pizzello

Nearly every television viewer in the country is familiar with Jerry Seinfeld's oft-quoted remark that his hugely popular sitcom depicting neurotic New York apartment dwellers is about "nothing."

In one sense, the comedian is correct. *Seinfeld* mines many of its laughs from the surreal mundanity of day-to-day life, uncannily pinpointing the small, subtle moments of absurdity that register fleetingly in our subconscious, then disappear.

But Wayne Kennan, ASC, who has been responsible for committing many of those eccentric riffs to film during his six-year tenure as the show's director of photography, differs slightly with the comedian's wry assessment of the *Seinfeld* phenomenon. "To me, content is everything," the cinematographer asserts. "And *Seinfeld*'s content is quirky. The show is about people's interactions on a daily basis. The plot is always secondary to the characters' relationships. If you really look at all of the *Seinfeld* characters, none of them is a really wonderful person. But all of us have those small, selfish sides, and those selfish sides are usually the funniest. *Seinfeld* is about how people really are. That's where the humor comes from."

In exploiting this "comedy ain't pretty" aesthetic, *Seinfeld* has proven itself to be one of the most freewheeling and subversive sitcoms in television history. Kennan remembers the exact moment when the show's creators realized just how far they could go. "There was a scene in one episode when Jerry's character actually mugged an old lady [who had a coveted loaf of rye bread]," he laughs. "The show does get some letters. There's usually no moral to a *Seinfeld* episode. [The creators] don't like shows with morals; they like shows that are more reality-based. 'What would this character normally do in real life?' they'll ask. 'Come on, he'd never share that with someone!' Our show isn't about a family being nice to each other, or resolving a minor tiff."

Just as *Seinfeld*'s subject matter has repeatedly broken free of network television's sometimes stodgy conventions, Kennan's cinematography has displayed a similar dedication to variety and originality. Even the greatest of television situation comedies, from *I Love Lucy* to *Cheers*, have been unable to avoid an inherent sense of claustrophobia, since their characters are almost never seen outside of the comfortably familiar apartment or neighborhood watering-hole. On *Seinfeld*, the performers have been liberated, and Kennan faces a refreshing plethora of visual challenges on a weekly basis.

Photos by Carin Baer, Byron Cohen, Gary Farr and David Richardson, courtesy of Castle Rock Entertainment.

"Last season I called the show's art director and asked how many swing sets — sets besides the permanents — we had for the year," Kennan recalls. "We had 276 swing sets! If you divide that number by the 22 episodes we shot, you

get more than 10 per show."

That number becomes even more impressive considering *Seinfeld*'s feverish, deadline-defying production pace. Scripts for episodes scheduled to shoot the following Tuesday or Wednesday night are usually discussed by *Seinfeld*'s writers during a Friday afternoon production meeting. "Once the writer finishes a 45-minute description of each scene and what we need for exteriors, all of the show's department heads go running for phones," Kennan describes. "Remember, we're not talking about Wednesday, when there are still two more days in the week. On Friday, the stores close at six!"

The actors usually attend a Friday morning read-through of the script, and on Monday Kennan begins shooting locations and any material that doesn't need to be performed on the *Seinfeld* soundstage at CBS Studios. Tuesdays are dedicated to the blocking of scenes that will be performed in front of the show's live studio audience. "After blocking, we'll clean up any possible lighting problems on the set and then shoot any process shots we might have," Kennan elaborates. "Usually we have at least one per episode, like a bluescreen shot of the characters driving through New York City. Then on Wednesday, we shoot the show in front of the audience. So production-wise, we basically get the show done in three days, with a little bit of prelighting on [the previous] Friday night. We call that "lighting air," because we really don't know what's going to happen at that point!"

Before his current stint on *Seinfeld*, Kennan had earned his stripes in network comedy on a pair of critically revered albeit drastically contrasting shows. After years of work as a freelance camera operator, the San Diego State Telecommunications and Film major was hired in 1987 to work under director of photography George LaFountaine, Sr., ASC on the droll CBS comedy *Newhart*. While serving as an operator, Kennan learned from LaFountaine the essential television skill of lighting a set for four cameras running simultaneously. When LaFountaine eventually stepped down, Kennan was given his first break and promoted to director of photography on *Newhart*.

From there, Kennan jumped to the zany, cult-favorite comedy series *Get a Life*, starring David Letterman alumnus Chris Elliot. But network executives pulled the plug on the low-rated series during its second season, after just 13 episodes. At about the same time, *Seinfeld*'s original director of photography resigned, and Kennan was quickly tapped to take over in the middle of the show's second season. Between seasons, Kennan has shot a feature film directed by *Seinfeld* cast member Jason Alexander entitled *For Better or Worse*, and he also recently served as director of photography on the upcoming low-budget feature film *George B.*

While growing up, Kennan recalls, he would watch black-and-white movies on television "incessantly." He cites legendary cinematographers Gregg Toland, ASC, and Arthur Miller, ASC as two of his biggest early influences. Upon graduation from San Diego State in 1973, Kennan was turned on to the new wave of cinematographers, including such ASC greats as Haskell Wexler, Conrad Hall, Vilmos Zsigmond, and in particular, Nestor Almendros.

"I used to love reading about how Almendros shot things, which was very unorthodox compared to how I had learned," Kennan recalls. "I came up through the studio system, where you used lamps and the tools that were in the truck, while Almendros was using mirrors and natural light."

Almendros' style of shooting with self-imposed limits would resonate with Kennan when he began working on *Seinfeld*. "Sitcoms impose their own special limits," he explains. "You have to shoot your close-ups and master shots all at once. You're shooting a scene in its entirety with four cameras, instead of placing the camera and the

Opposite page, upper left: ***While visiting his mother (Estelle Harris) in the hospital, George Costanza (Jason Alexander) struggles to remain "master of his domain" as he is tormented by the silhouetted sponge bath of a neighboring female patient. This infamous episode, titled "The Contest," details the hilarious consequences of a bet between Jerry, George, Kramer and Elaine about who can remain celibate the longest.*** **Opposite, lower right:** ***Jerry and Elaine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) share a nosh at their local diner, one of Seinfeld's regular settings.*** **This page, top:** ***The crew executes a bluescreen process shot for a driving scene.*** **Bottom:** ***Kennan takes a reading on the show's "night exterior" set. To create "moonlight" in the studio, the cinematographer bounces a blue-gelled Mole-Richardson 20K into a large overhead silk.***

Above: ***Kennan (at left) surveys the setup as his crew prepares to shoot a scene in Jerry's "apartment," which is always rendered in simple, monotone colors.*** **Right:** ***The cameraman notes that scenes which occur near the set's oft-used front-door area are always a challenge because of the angle of the door itself. "We have a little tweenie light hanging over the kitchen that is aimed at the front door," Kennan says. "And it's a real pain, because it has to be trimmed every episode depending on how the actors stand around [the door]."***

lights for each shot. Believe it or not, that's what we try to do on *Seinfeld*. In many ways, we're forced to because we have so many sets. Not a lot happens on our sets *physically* — a scene usually just consists of a couple of people talking, which gives us the opportunity to do a little more than you can if you're lighting a whole set so that the actors can walk wherever they want. We pick places where the actors are going to move, and then just light those areas. After the blocking, sometimes some of our sets are lit with only two or three lights."

The show's signature set is Seinfeld's modest Manhattan bachelor apartment, which serves as a 24-hour sanctuary for the comedian's clique of angst-filled acquaintances. "I came into the show late, but I have a feeling it's modeled after Jerry's real-life New York pad," Kennan relates. "That set is really dressed to his specifications. If you notice one thing about the apartment, it's that it's very monotone. It's not colorful. Any time a set decorator has tried to put in an accent somewhere, it's been removed. The set is very clean-looking, and it really drives your attention to what's going on in the scene."

The crucial front-door area, where Seinfeld's circle of cronies often barge in unannounced, provides the biggest logistical headaches for Kennan. "It's always been a problem lighting people there because of the angle of the front door," he says. "We have a little tweenie light hanging over the kitchen that is aimed at the front door. And it's a real pain, because it has to be trimmed every episode depending on how the actors stand around that front door. The boom operator has problems, too, because he has to be in there with the microphone. The front door is the toughest part of the set, but it's also the most-used area."

The most striking colors in the apartment are provided by the potpourri of cereal boxes prominently displayed in the kitchen area. "Jerry loves cereal in real life; it's his favorite thing to eat when he's walking around the set," Kennan reveals with a chuckle. "Certain parts of the set get accented. I'll use inkies, tweenies and peppers to give a little punch to the cereal boxes, the bathroom sink, and the black phone over by the computer. The characters spend a lot of time on that phone, and hitting it with a small light ensures that the area around it isn't just a dark hole on the set."

In addition to the accents, Kennan uses two 5K Senior Fresnel lights and two 2K Junior Fresnels as his keylights for the entire apartment. A Senior over the front door covers the area from the couch to the armchair, while an upstage Junior is pointed at the area stretching from the couch to Jerry's 'office' area. Another Senior left of the main camera covers the area behind the couch to the kitchen, while a downstage Junior is responsible for the area in front of the couch. Preferring the controllable quality of hard light, Kennan softens the scene only slightly by adding GamColor Medium Frost No. 10 gels on the lamps.

"Sometimes we'll switch some of those lights off if the actors aren't going to play in a certain area, to give the set a bit more texture," Kennan adds. "And if we need sunlight in a scene, we'll aim an open-eyed Senior through the window blinds, creating a nice hard shadow."

No matter how rigorous the planning, a wild card is always thrown into the mix whenever Michael Richards, who plays Jerry's spastic neighbor Kramer, decides to inject a scene with some spontaneous slapstick. "If Michael's in a scene, we know that we can't mount lights on any doors or walls," Kennan says with a laugh. "We have to hang them independently, otherwise he'll surely bump into them and make them bounce and jiggle. Sometimes it slips our minds, and just as we're about to start shooting a scene with him, we'll say, "Oh man, we forgot..." Then we'll have to re-

David Darby has been a Director of Photography since 1985, shooting commercials for such products as Acura, Chevrolet, Ford, Kodak, Lowenbrau and Mercedes Benz.

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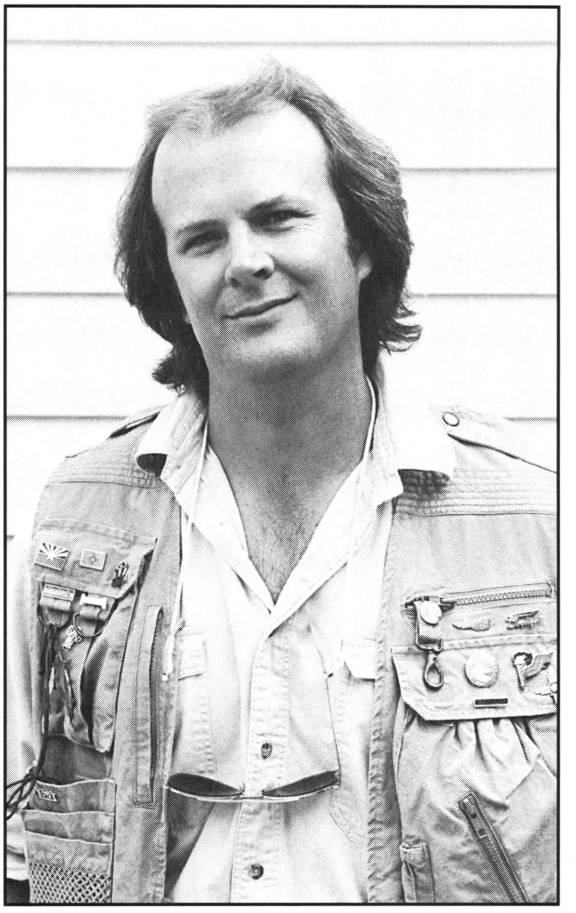

David Darby, Director of Photography

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"So when the crew broke for lunch, I drove over to Clairmont with my lens, their bellows and the tubes. Denny immediately put the whole rig up on his MTF machine: six stops. I thanked him (for about the two hundredth time) and ran back to the stage. After lunch, we made the shot."

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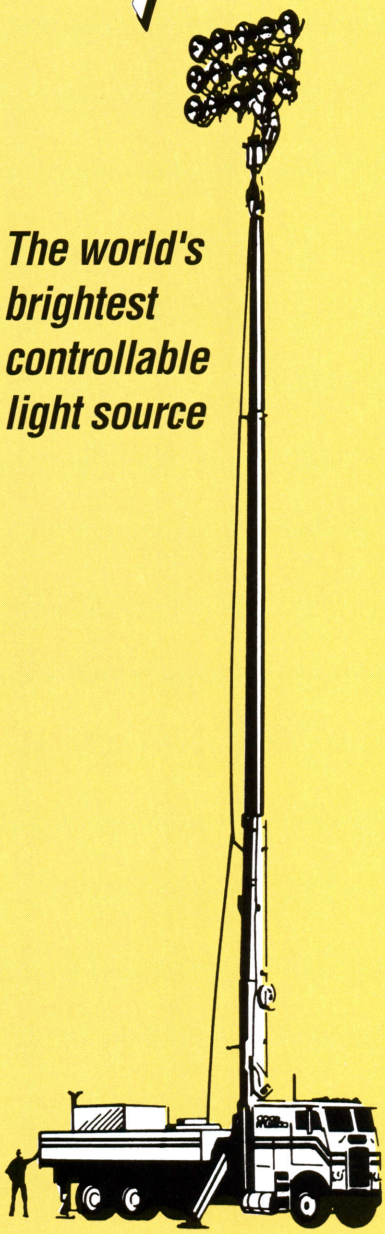
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Kramer (Michael Richards) squares off in a karate match with a young opponent on one of the show's many swing sets. During the 1995 season alone, Kennan and his crew confronted a grand total of 276 such sets.

mount all of the lights. Everything has to be secured when Michael is in a scene."

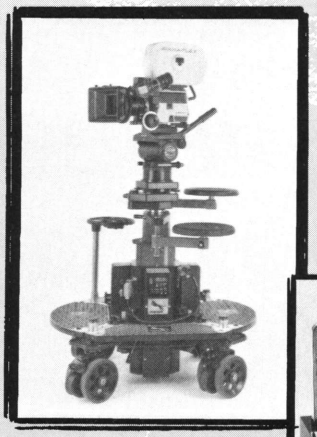
Careful consideration is given to the type of film used for the show, as Seinfeld and co-creator Larry David (who left the show before the current season) have been mindful of preserving a consistent look for a show that will most likely live on for years to come in syndication. "Switching film stocks has always been sort of traumatic," Kennan says, "because when you have a show that's been successful and suddenly you have to change, there's a photographic history that you want to maintain."

When Kennan took over as director of photography in the second season, Agfa 320 (and later Agfa 400) was the stock of choice on *Seinfeld*. "Then Agfa went out of business, so we did a test of three other stocks for the show," he recalls. "We compared Kodak's 5296, 98 and Primetime negatives. Prime time didn't render Jerry's apartment in the bluish-gray tones that Jerry was used to seeing with the Agfa. The 98 was wonderful, but we ended up going with the 96 for the best cost. The price has since gone down on 98, so we're using that for the current season."

Today's higher film speeds allow television cinematographers to exercise more control with front bounce fill light than in the blindingly bright soundstages of yore. "In the old days, say pre-1976 or 1978, cinematographers were hanging a big row of Seniors and just pointing them straight into the set for the fill light," Kennan explains. "They needed a lot more footcandles with the lower-speed films back then. The sets were really hot, too. Now, because we have the higher speeds, we don't have to do that. I love using Juniors bounced into beadboard — it's topped, shelved and very sectional, so you can even take part of the set and give it less fill than another part. For night scenes, I'll just cut down on the amount of fill light."

On more than a few memorable occasions, *Seinfeld*'s writers have cheekily betrayed a fondness for film history. Kennan has exploited such scenes to craft some amusing visual homages to the instantly recognizable styles of classic film cinematographers. In an episode in which Jerry ventures into Little Italy, for example, the most famous Italian-themed movie of all was immediately called upon for inspiration.

"The writers wanted the scene to look like the *Godfather* movies," recalls Kennan. "So I told them, 'Get me a tape of the scene we're trying to mimic here.' They showed me the sequence in *The Godfather II* in which Robert De Niro goes to a neighborhood cafe to ask a favor of Don Fanucci. In our show, Jerry visits a local Don to ask if there are any villas to rent in



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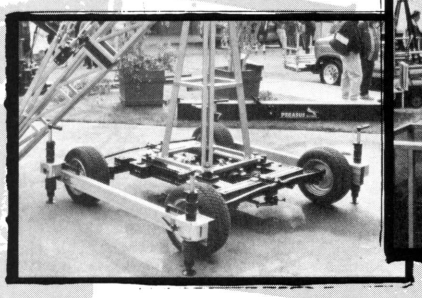

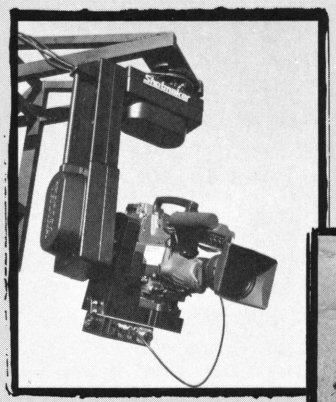

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Tuscany. So I just got the actor who was going to play the Don and used harsh light on him from a high enough vantage point to mimic the look created by Gordon Willis, ASC. We used just a tiny bit of fill light. I hope we pulled it off! The writers are quite big fans of great films."

For another episode in which Elaine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) tries to come up with an alibi after the couch in the lobby of her boss's apartment building is stolen, Kennan's mission was to make the scene look like "an old Barbara Stanwyck movie.

"It's a little hard to light film noir for four cameras, but at the same time the actors and writers will work with us a lot," Kennan says. "I'll say, 'We can do this if the actors really hit their marks in certain places.' And they're really good about that. I took down the fill light and got rid of any light that was not needed for the scene, like the light for the cereal boxes in Jerry's apartment. Certain parts of the set got highlighted, and we shut off any light that wasn't where somebody was sitting or standing."

> "If you really look at all of the *Seinfeld* characters, none of them is a really wonderful person. But all of us have those small, selfish sides, and those selfish sides are usually the funniest."
>
> — Wayne Kennan, ASC

What makes *Seinfeld* a true anomaly among network sitcoms is its extensive use of outdoor scenes, in particular an authentic looking New York street specially built for the show on the CBS lot by production designer Thomas E. Azzari. The street is so useful that other New York-based shows on the same lot, such as *Caroline in the City* and *The Single Guy*, have begun to employ the location for their own 'urban' scenes.

Azzari incorporated several of Kennan's ideas when he was designing the street. "I told him that we would have to be able to place a silk over it," the cinematographer recalls. "If you're in New York City, you don't have sunshine very much because the buildings are so tall. By silking the entire street, you don't have any hard shadows. You can practically shoot in any direction all day long without very much extra bounce or fill or anything. It's this big, glowing street that gives you the feeling that the buildings are higher than two or three stories.

"All of the street lamps have dimmers on them," Kennan adds. "You can selectively turn them on or off, or dim them to whatever level you want. Plus, the street is cabled for electricity, and there are mounts on top of the buildings so you can slide a 5K, 10K or a Junior into them really easily if you need them for a night scene."

When shooting a night scene on the street, Kennan will turn to one of this favorite tools, the Mole-Richardson 20K. "It's the greatest light ever built," he declares. "It does everything an HMI does, without the HMI problems. You don't have the ballast, you just have this big light. For night scenes, we just leave our silk up and bounce our blue-gelled 20K into the silk to give the whole scene moonlight."

Since the outdoor scenes are shot either on the lot or on location in sunny Los Angeles, Kennan even goes to the trouble of choosing lights that will subtly impress upon the viewer a New York City ambience. "I think I'm one of the few cinematographers who still uses nine-lights," he says. "I use nine-lights and double Fays when we go outside on our New York street. I remember reading somewhere that nine-lights and double Fays gained popularity when they were used to shoot on location in New York in the Sixties. So I said, 'Okay, we'll use those to hopefully give the show more of a New York feel.'

Those lights give you a little harsher look, and they're not as controllable. But I'm the sort of cinematographer who likes limits. By imposing limits on myself, I can hopefully solve problems in a way that will give the show a consistent style. I like just having one or two choices."

Aficionados of gritty, location-based New York films such as the 1970s classic *The French Connection* will notice Kennan's apt lens selection in the many *Seinfeld* scenes in which characters stroll along the New York street. "We use four Cooke 6:1 zoom lenses for the show, but when we go out on the street, we'll either rent the 10:1 or the 11:1," he says. "When we first started shooting on the street, I said to myself, 'There are two shots here that are going to be really good. One is the dolly shot down the street, either off the crane or on a dolly, and the other will be shooting with a long lens at one end of the street.' You see that shot in a lot of films set in New York, especially those from the Seventies. We use that shot an awful lot in our show, and I like it because it makes you feel as if you're in New York. Also, you don't need that many extras in the background, because they're all compressed."

Kennan's techniques worked to particularly illusory effect on one of the most famous *Seinfeld* episodes, which pokes fun at the dictatorial reign of Manhattan's infamous "Soup Nazi." The cinematographer's task was to make actors on an indoor set look as if they were waiting in a long outdoor line to order the surly chef's delectable soup. "We lit that scene as an exterior onstage," Kennan explains. "We found a technique that we really liked, which we had also used on an earlier episode that was supposed to be set at a tennis tournament. We hung a silk up high over the set, and above it we placed several Mighty-Moles. Each one was placed seven feet apart from the next in a grid pattern, punching through the silk so that the whole scene had this really heavy top light — which is what you see when you're out in the shade between buildings in

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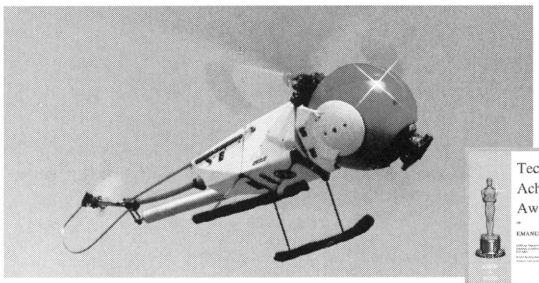

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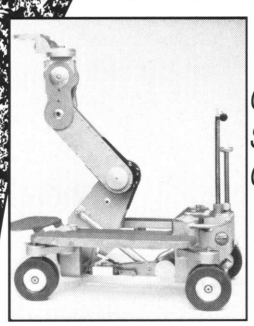

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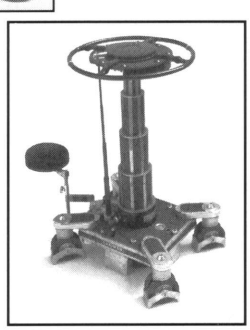

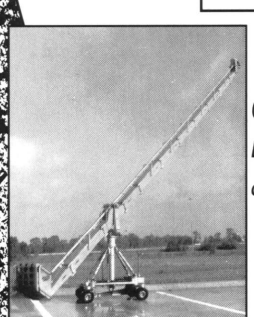

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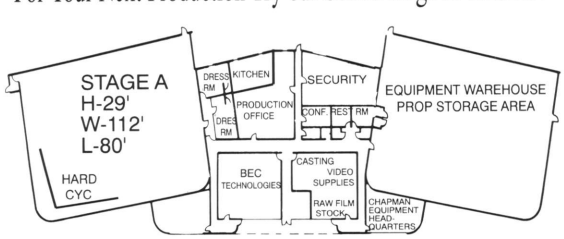

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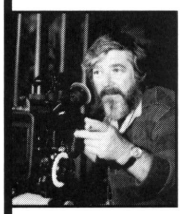

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New York. Jason [Alexander, who plays Seinfeld's friend George Costanza] had a line to say just before he was about to go into the soup kitchen, so we punched him with a 5K straight through the silk so that you could see his eyes. A lot of people thought we filmed that scene outside. Even the actors remarked on how real it looked."

Occasionally, an exterior scene in *Seinfeld* will call for the bigger-than-life, carnival atmosphere that only the real New York City can provide. When the opportunity arises, Kennan doesn't hesitate to use electronic post to blend his own photography with actual New York footage shot by a separate location crew.

> "Our production is unorthodox from day one. But we've done it and gotten used to it, and I think it's what gives the show its spontaneity."

In one episode, for instance, wannabe fireman Kramer has decided that he knows a quicker route to a breaking blaze than a New York fire company. After commandeering the rear seat of a hook-and-ladder, he goes along for the ride, shouting directions all the way. Inevitably, in true *Seinfeld* fashion, the truck gets stuck in gridlock and the building burns down. "We tried to do the scene on our New York street, with Michael on the back seat of the hook-and-ladder and our buildings going past him in the background," Kennan describes. "But it just didn't look right. So somebody said, 'Can't we do this on a bluescreen?' And I replied, 'You mean hang a bluescreen right here on the street? I've never done it, but let's try it!' Our producer, Tim Kaiser, is an expert with today's electronic special effects tools, which make things like that very easy and inexpensive to do. You don't have to be that critical with the bluescreen lighting and the foreground subject.

"The bad thing was that we didn't already have background plates. We needed a shot of buildings in New York City going by for the background. I gave the location manager in New York a note saying, 'The scene is overcast, so you've got to shoot on an overcast day or on a shady street, or else it won't match.' And they actually found someplace in New York to do that. The bluescreen we used behind Michael was huge; it was two stories high and probably about 40 or 50 feet wide. The camera was placed at an angle where we got a good shot of Michael — slightly below and showing a bit of the ladder in front of him, so you knew where he was. We didn't light him at all, because there was a polysilk over our street with the sun shining through it.

"If we had lit him, it would have started looking very much like a bluescreen shot. If you were driving down an actual New York street with a camera mounted on a firetruck, you probably wouldn't light the actor. You'd just go with what was available to make the scene look more realistic, because he'd be going through all kinds of light."

For *Seinfeld*, Kennan uses three Panavision X cameras and one Gold, which he can also use for handheld shooting. Camera movement can become particularly tricky on the show's frequent location shoots, since Kennan has to worry about the the placement of four different cameras. To solve the problem, director Andy Ackerman often opts for the speed and convenience afforded by a Steadicam.

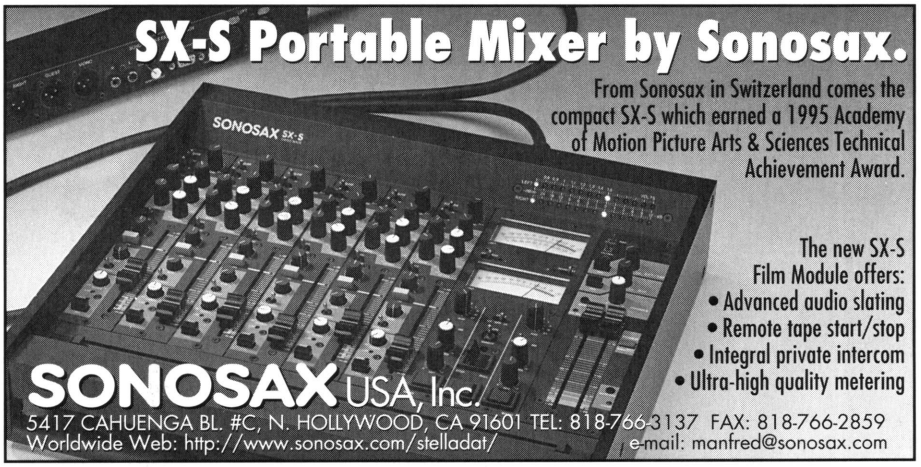
In one episode shot primarily at El Rancho Park in Los Angeles, Seinfeld's softball team of fellow stand-up comedians goes to battle against an opposing team comprising Bette Midler (playing herself) and other cast members from a New York play. The friendly spirit of competition quickly evaporates when the famed performer is trampled on

the basepaths and has to be carted off to the hospital.

"We used a Steadicam for most of the episode because it's a human dolly," Kennan explains. "We usually have much more to do than is physically possible at a location. We usually leave two or three cameras stationary on tripods, and let the Steadicam do all of the moves. We don't take dollies usually, unless we're going to a place with a lot of flat floors. On a baseball diamond, you really can't dolly unless you lay a bunch of track, and trying to lay track for four cameras is insanity! So we brought the Steadicam to be the master and get the transition moves that we needed."

Despite the show's bulky shooting script and its creators' unusual willingness to experiment within a half-hour format, Kennan admits that the frantic work pace sets an appropriate tone for the madcap spirit of a typical *Seinfeld* episode. "Our production is unorthodox from day one," he points out. "We usually don't have a script until Sunday. Most shows are run on a tight ship — they're four scripts ahead, whereas we're never, ever ahead! But we've done it and gotten used to it, and I think it's what gives the show its spontaneity. We figure out how to do things on the spot. Most shows have a 40- or 50-page script, but we have a 70- or 80-page script. Most shows have maybe six or seven scenes, we have 30!"

Although Seinfeld himself has been coy about how long the show will continue to run, Kennan betrays a note of sentimentality when asked to consider the inevitable day when the curtain will fall on *Seinfeld*'s long Thursday-night reign. "I just hope there is something else as fun to work on once it's over," he says. "That's the worst part of doing a show like *Seinfeld* — thinking about what you're going to do afterwards. I'm just thankful that we're doing another year; hopefully, we'll be on a year after that, too." ◆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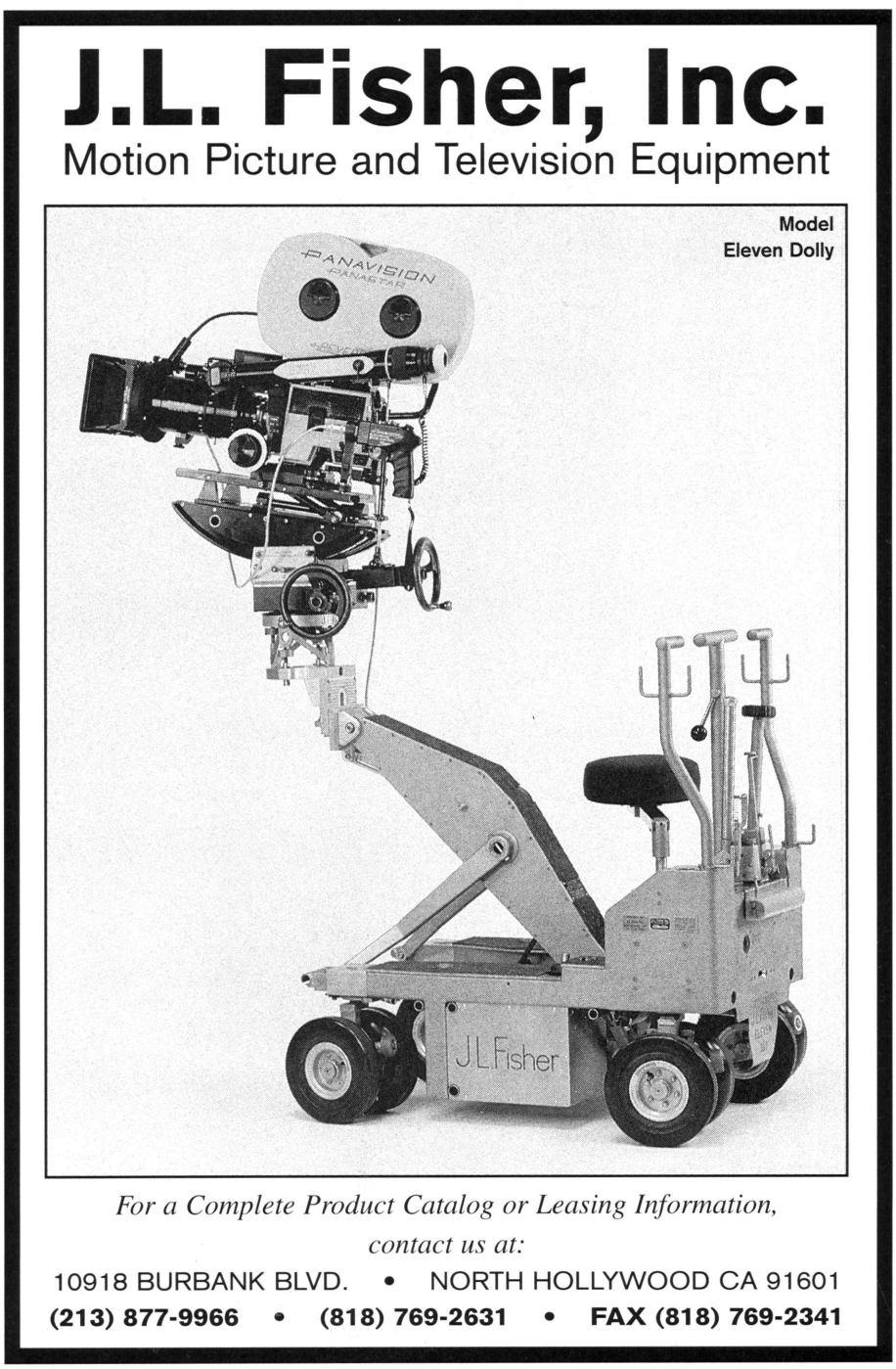

1996 Emmy Nominations Offer an Eyeful

Ten cinematographers are honored by their peers for creating the year's most indelible television images.

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson, David E. Williams and David Heuring

Though televisual cinematography in the Nineties is more exciting and polished than ever, directors of photography in the small-screen medium still must struggle with scant pre-production time and rapidly paced shooting schedules. Profiled in the ensuing pages are the 1996 Emmy nominees: a collection of cinematographers who have been recognized for the deft luminescence they have lent to the various images emanating from glowing cathode-ray tubes nationwide.

Cinematography for a series

John C. Flinn III, ASC
Babylon 5
"Comes the Inquisitor"

For the second consecutive year, John Flinn III has earned an Emmy nomination for illuminating the 24th-century sci-fi series *Babylon 5*. He was also feted last year for the episode "The Geometry of Shadow."

Flinn's familial pedigree drew him into the film business; his grandfather was vice president of Cecil B. DeMille's studio, while his father served as a director of publicity and advertising at Columbia Studios for 25 years. Flinn's own career in the industry began in the early Sixties as an actor and stunt person on such programs as *Get Smart* and *Gunsmoke*. In 1965, he became attracted to the other side of the camera.

A recommendation from then-Columbia camera department head Bill Widenmeyer gave Flinn the opportunity to work as a second assistant under cameraman Freddy Jackson; ironically, he ended up on the camera crew of both *Get Smart* and *Gunsmoke*. For years, Flinn assisted such ASC members as William Fraker, Ted Voigtlander, Robert Morrison, Richard Rawlings, Sr., Robert Surtees and Monroe Askins, Sr.; he graduated to director of photography in 1979 on the movie-of-the-week *Flame is Love*.

Flinn has worked exclusively in television ever since, lending his talents to such hit shows as *Hawaii Five-O, Hill Street Blues* and the last 3 ½ seasons of *Magnum P.I.*, a program for which he received a 1988 Emmy nomination (for the episode "Unfinished Business"). In 1990, Flinn earned another Emmy nomination for the CBS movie-of-the-week *The Operation*. Flinn's next series, *Jake and the Fatman* , earned him Emmy nominations in 1989 and 1990 ("Wish You Were Here," "If I Didn't Care"), ASC nominations in 1991 and 1992 ("God Bless the Child," "Street of Dreams") and a 1992 ASC Award ("Nightmare"), for an episode on which he performed double duty as cinematographer and director.

— A.T.

Kenneth D. Zunder, ASC
Chicago Hope
"Leave of Absence"

This Emmy nomination marks the second time this year that Kenneth Zunder has been recognized for the heart-wrenching "Leave of Absence" episode from the medical series *Chicago Hope;* he also received an ASC nomination for his work on this particular show, in which one of the hospital's attorneys dies on the operating table due to a fatal gunshot wound. The operating surgeon (played by Mandy Patinkin) is the godfather to the attorney's orphaned child and ends up leaving the hospital, and the show, to become a guardian to the youth.

Says Zunder, "I always feel that the better the script, the better I can make my work. I chose [to submit] 'Leave of Absence' because I felt it was one of the better scripts this year. It offered a wide variety of looks that I felt that were typical of the year's worth of work, and it was one of the stronger stories emotionally."

Zunder became interested in film while an art history student at Harvard. After graduating from Stanford in 1975 with a master's degree in documentary filmmaking, he spent the next few years shooting documentaries in the Bay Area. In 1978, Zunder earned a place in the prestigious apprenticeship program of the International Photographers' Guild. Following the completion of a 40-week training program, Zunder was admitted to the Guild as a second assistant. He then worked under such accomplished cinematographers as Laszlo Kovacs, ASC, Robert Liu, ASC, Phil Lathrop, ASC (*Airport '79*), Michael Chapman, ASC (*Personal Best*), John Lindley (*True Believer*) and John Seale, ACS (*Rain Man*).

Zunder was made a first assistant by Tom Del Ruth, ASC, for whom he worked on the films *The Breakfast Club* and *The Running Man*. In 1989, Zunder moved from camera operator (for Robert Primes, ASC) to director of photography on the series *thirtysomething*, for which he garnered a 1990 ASC nomination ("The Go-Between"). Zunder also received ASC nominations for the next two TV shows on which he was director of photography: *Brooklyn Bridge* ("The Immigrants") and *seaQuest* (series pilot). His work on the latter show that also earned him a 1994 Emmy nomination ("Such Great Patience"). — A.T.

Richard Thorpe
ER
"Hell and High Water"

Tackling the the hyperreal environs of Cook County Hospital for the critically acclaimed medical drama series *ER* is nothing new for director of photography Richard Thorpe. The cinematographer has previously lent his talents to some other well-known medical dramas: prior to *ER*, he was one of two directors of photography on *China Beach*, and during his years as a camera assistant, Thorpe worked for Bill Jurgenson on two seasons of *M.A.S.H.*

Thorpe takes a decidely uncoventional approach to *ER* in that he eschews the staid set-piece staging that's traditionally marked the genre. The show is filmed primarily with a Steadicam (by operator Guy Bee) to heighten the frenetic sense of urgency that occurs within emergency room situations.

The Warner Bros. soundstage on which the series is shot is a replica East Los Angeles' derelict Linda Vista Hospital (where *ER*'s pilot episode was shot), albeit on a slightly larger scale, and with strategically placed windows through which Thorpe shines simulated daylight and nighttime sources.

ER 's photographic process (the show is shot on film and then transferred to tape) has had some influence on the cinematographer's lighting scheme, in that he likes to flood the set with blue light, and then overexpose the film one stop. Says Thorpe, "I like to give a blue thick negative because I've found that it's the best kind of negative to give to the tape people for the transfer. With the type of process that exists today, an overexposed blue negative gives the colorist the most latitude to do different things."

Born in Britain and raised in Sherman Oaks, California, Thorpe enrolled at Cal State Northridge to prepare for his planned career as an anthropol

EMMY NOMINATIONS FOR CINEMATOGRAPHY 1996

SERIES

John C. Flinn III, ASC
Babylon 5, "Comes the Inquisitor"

Kenneth D. Zunder, ASC
Chicago Hope, "Leave of Absence"

Richard Thorpe
ER, "Hell and High Water"

Aaron Schneider
Murder One, "Chapter One"

John S. Bartley, CSC*
The X Files, "Grotesque"

MINISERIES OR SPECIAL

Robert Primes, ASC
Harrison, Cry of the City

Donald M. Morgan, ASC
Ruby Ridge: An American Tragedy (Part 2)

Howard Atherton, BSC
Gulliver's Travels (Part I)

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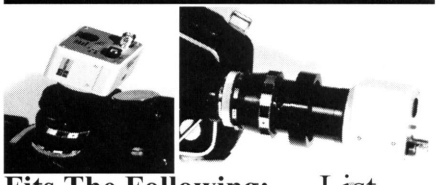

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ogy teacher. After shooting several documentaries at the university, however, Thorpe's focus switched to cinema. Following a short stint with Cinemobile Inc., Thorpe served as a film loader for 20th Century Fox in 1974. He then spent next 15 years toiling as a cinematographic assistant for such luminaries as Haskell Wexler, ASC, Conrad Hall, ASC, and Harry May, before becoming a director of photography on *China Beach*. — A.T.

Aaron Schneider
Murder One
"Chapter One"

Aaron Schneider left Iowa State University and his studies in mechanical engineering to enroll into the cinematography program at USC. Fortunately, he was able to attend the "Reflections" series workshops hosted by many internationally esteemed cinematographers. Subsequently, he began shooting commercials and music videos. His impressive body of work caught the eye of director Charles Haid, who hired him for the series *Murder One*.

His evocative work on the episode "Chapter Four" earned Schneider the 1995 ASC Award for Best Cinematography in a Regular Series [see *AC* May '96].

Schneider's list of credits includes music videos for such artists as Blues Traveler, Ice Cube and Dr. Dre, and House of Pain; commercials for Mercedes, Lexus, and Nike; the indie feature *The Accident;* and second-unit work on *Things to do in Denver When You're Dead* and *Under Surveillance*.

Schneider recently completed principal photography on the upcoming feature *Kiss the Girls*. — D.W.

John S. Bartley, CSC
The X Files
"Grotesque"

John S. Bartley, CSC grew up in New Zealand, left school at 15 to start working in theater and was immediately seduced by the art of lighting. After moving to Toronto because he couldn't get a U.S. work visa, Bartley wound up managing a rental house and freelancing as a gaffer on commercials. Leaving the rental business and moving into features, he worked as gaffer for Sven Nykvist, ASC; John Lindley; and Frank Tidy, BSC. That experience eventually evolved into director of photography work on music videos, commercials, and trailers. Bartley's first feature was the sci-fi film *Beyond the Stars*. He later photographed the series *Booker* and *The Commish*, as well as the pilots for *Outlaw* and *Both Sides of the Street*.

Bartley's startling work on *The X-Files* has brought him widespread accolades, including a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for "One Breath," a 1994 ASC Award nomination for "Duane Barry," and a 1995 ASC Award nomination for "731."

The cinematographer has concluded his run on the series and plans to move into the feature realm. — D.W.

Cinematography for a Miniseries or Special

Robert Primes, ASC
Harrison, Cry of the City

Before moving to Los Angeles, Robert Primes, ASC began his career as a director of photography in San Francisco, shooting documentaries and commercials. He then built his resumé with such experiences as shooting second unit for Stephen Burum, ASC on *Rumblefish*, filming director Sam Raimi's absurd comedy *Crimewave*, and performing on the cinematographic team for the acclaimed 1984 L.A. Olympics documentary *16 Days of Glory*.

Primes later received critical attention for his trend-setting work on the first 22-episode season of *thirtysomething* — which inarguably influenced the visual style of many subsequent shows and commercials. He went on to shoot 11 episodes of *Quantum Leap*, the features *Bird on a Wire* and *The Hard Way* for director John Badham, and the ski film *Aspen Extreme*.

Primes has previously earned a 1991 ASC Award nomination for the pilot of the series *Reasonable Doubts*. Last year, his

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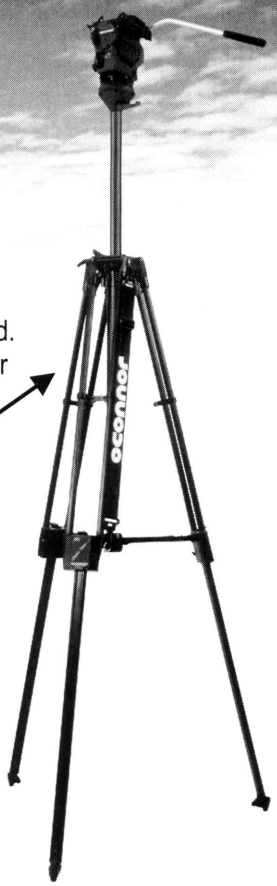

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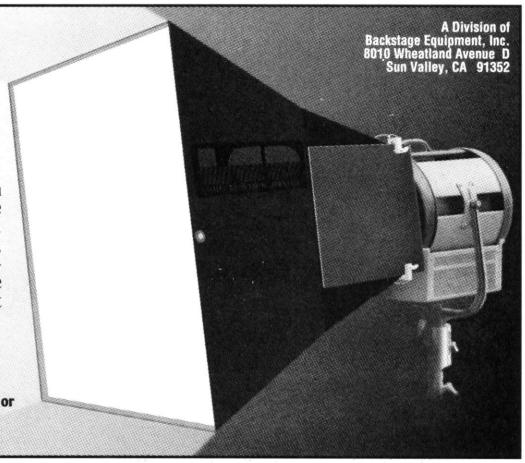

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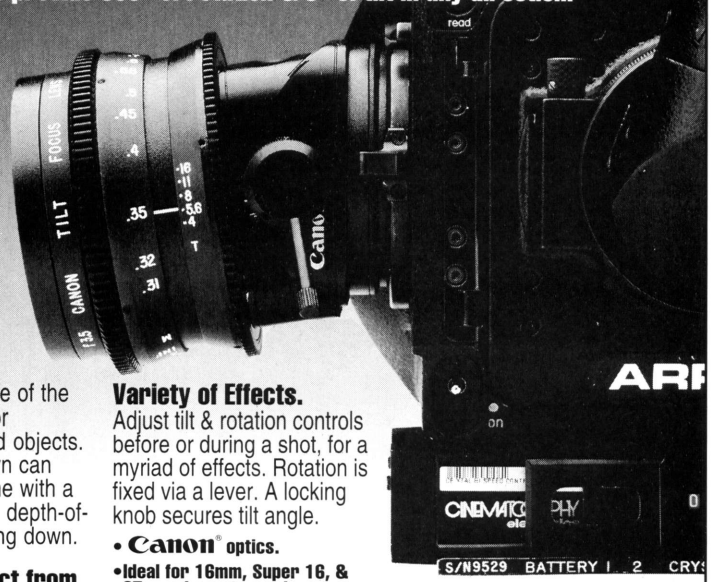

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evocative work on the period romance *My Antonia* earned him both an ACE Award nomination and the Emmy Award for Best Cinematography.

"In TV you cannot be a perfectionist," the cameraman notes. "If you want to do dramatic, exciting work, you've got to do it with bold strokes — you have to try to come up with ideas that don't take very thin brushstrokes to execute. I use very little fill because light is more dramatic when it's a single thrust, from one direction. You can either avoid mistakes or go for greatness. If you're afraid of making mistakes, you'll hold back a little. If I'm worrying that I'm doing a little too much, I know that's a good sign — I know I'm not being tame or safe."

Primes recently made his entry into the digital-media arena by photographing an epic science fiction-themed CD-ROM project due out later this year. — D.W.

Donald M. Morgan, ASC
***Ruby Ridge: An American Tragedy* (Part 2)**

Born in Hollywood, Donald M. Morgan, ASC gained his first entry into the cinematographic field in 1953 as a lab technician. One could say that he was entering the family business, as his father had at one time been a multi-plane animation camera operator for Disney. Morgan would later gain experience as a camera crewperson on such films as *Too Late the Hero* (photographed by Joseph Biroc, ASC) and Clint Eastwood's directorial debut *Play Misty For Me* (shot by Bruce Surtees). He got his start as afeature cinematographer on the western *Santee* and later spent several years specializing in aerial camerawork.

Morgan's other feature credits include *A Piece of the Action* and *Let's Do it Again*, directed by Sidney Poitier; *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* and *Used Cars* with director Robert Zemeckis; and *Christine* and *Starman* with director John Carpenter.

Following *Starman*, Morgan spent the next six years concentrating on commercial work,

later moving back into filmic storytelling. The cameraman's television work has earned him many honors, including a 1979 Emmy nomination for the Carpenter-directed *Elvis*, 1990 ASC and Emmy Awards for *Murder In Mississippi*, 1991 Emmy and ACE nominations for *Doublecrossed*, a 1991 ASC Award for *Dillinger*; and a 1993 ACE nomination and Emmy and ASC Awards for *Geronimo*.

Morgan's most recent theatrical production was the family comedy *Born to be Wild*. —D.W.

Howard Atherton, BSC
***Gulliver's Travels* (Part I)**

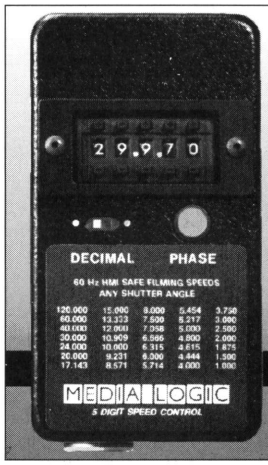
The first-ever co-production between NBC and England's Channel Four, this new version of Jonathan Swift's classic tale featured Ted Danson as Gulliver and Peter O'Toole as the Emperor of the Lilliputians. A roster of well-known and well-respected British actors filled in as the court.

As might be expected, the show depended heavily on special effect techniques. In the finished product, blue- and greenscreen shots co-exist with computer graphics, along with extensive miniature and model work. The production was shot in Portugal, various locations in England and at Shepperton Studios. Visual effects were handled by Framestore.

Director of photography Howard Atherton is best known for his work in the feature world. Some of the more recent credits on his lengthy resumé are *Lolita, Bad Boys, Indecent Proposal, Mermaids,* and *Fatal Attraction*.

"With effects films, the main thing is to try to make it look as if the effects didn't exist," says Atherton. "*Gulliver's Travels* is a fabulous story, with very colorful, toyland characters. It was important to keep it bright and cheerful, but it does have its dark side.

"Late in the story, Gulliver returns to his home, which we photographed as very real and very 'down,'" Atherton continues. "The people there think he's mad. We used a mix of 5296, 5293, and 5248 film stocks, depending on the scene and the type of set. For the computer graphics and the bluescreen



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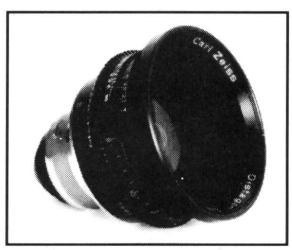

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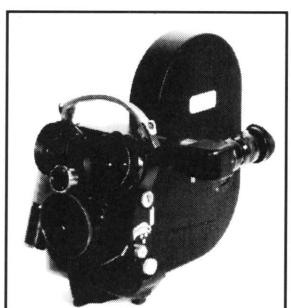

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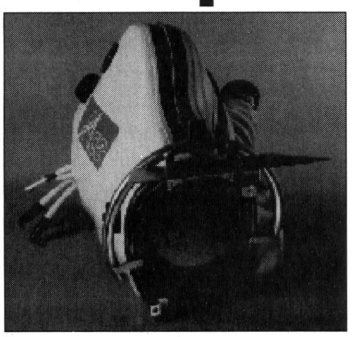

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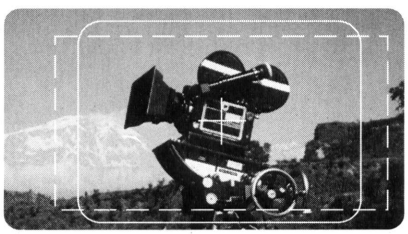

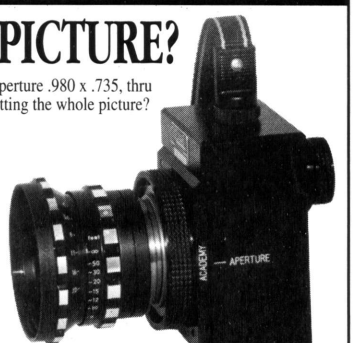

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stuff, we tried to stay with the slower stocks. The real difficulty was in scaling the lighting up or down for the opposite element. How do you light a room to feel as if it was lit with lights that were 70 feet tall?"

Obviously, Atherton was able to answer that question on the screen. In fact, the cinematographer is currently at work on another effects-laden project, a Disney film called *Deep Rising*.

— D.H.

Ric Waite, ASC
Andersonville

Andersonville chronicles a dark chapter in Civil War history; the title refers to a prison camp built to house Union prisoners of war. Severe shortages caused by the military successes of the North meant crude conditions, little or no food, and overcrowding for the prisoners. At the end of the war, prisoners were promised freedom, but in actuality many were simply sent to other prisons in the South.

Cinematographer Ric Waite received his fifth Emmy nomination for the show, which was shot in a stockade compound specially constructed for the production outside of Atlanta. Waite's many feature credits include *48 Hours, Adventures in Babysitting, Brewster's Millions, Cobra, Footloose, The Great Outdoors, Red Dawn, Summer Rental,* and *The Border.*

For *Andersonville,* natural light was the order of the day, with wood fires and oil lamps providing much of the illumination. "They didn't really have much wood in the real camp, due to shortages caused by the war," says Waite. "But we had to cheat a little — we needed to have some kind of motivation, and firelight was the answer. They did have candles, so at night we played off of that motivation."

Waite did bring in a full-sized Musco truck for a week of night exteriors. "During the war, tunnels [were being dug] all the time," says Waite. "So our heroes tunnel out, and the scene where they come out of the hole outside the wall is pretty cinematic. The camera was looking at about an

eight-acre set, and it was pretty challenging to get that lit up." To illuminate the escape sequence, Waite used the Musco and HMIs with half correction. — D.H.

Elemer Ragalyi
Rasputin

Elemer Ragalyi is yet another graduate of the Hungarian film school that produced ASC members Vilmos Zsigmond, Laszlo Kovacs and Lajos Koltai, among others. Not as well-known in this country as his fellow Hungarians, Ragalyi has nonetheless photographed more than 100 films since 1968. He is currently at work on a version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* for Turner Pictures that stars Mandy Patinkin in the title role.

"I think the reason we Hungarian cinematographers have been so successful is that we learned to make films with absolutely no equipment," Ragalyi laughs. "Now when I have an American budget — even a small one — I feel as if I'm in paradise. It's much more than I ever imagined I would have."

Rasputin recounts the life of the charismatic priest who had the ear of the czar during the last days of Romanovs. The lead role is played by Alan Rickman. "It was touching to see the situation in St. Petersburg," Ragalyi says. "It's incredible to see how people are living. It's nice to see the wonderful buildings, and remarkable architecture, but sad to see the bad situation of the people. The contrast is unimaginable."

In addition to cinematography, Ragalyi's other passion is medieval architecture, and buildings often serve as inspiration during a shoot. On his latest project, he is working in the great gothic cathedral in Rouen, France, which is standing in for Paris' Notre Dame. "I just love to be in that cathedral," says Ragalyi. "We're working 14 or 15 hours a day, but I'm able to do it because when I get tired, I just sit down and look up. You can feel that something special happened here, and is still happening."

— D.H.

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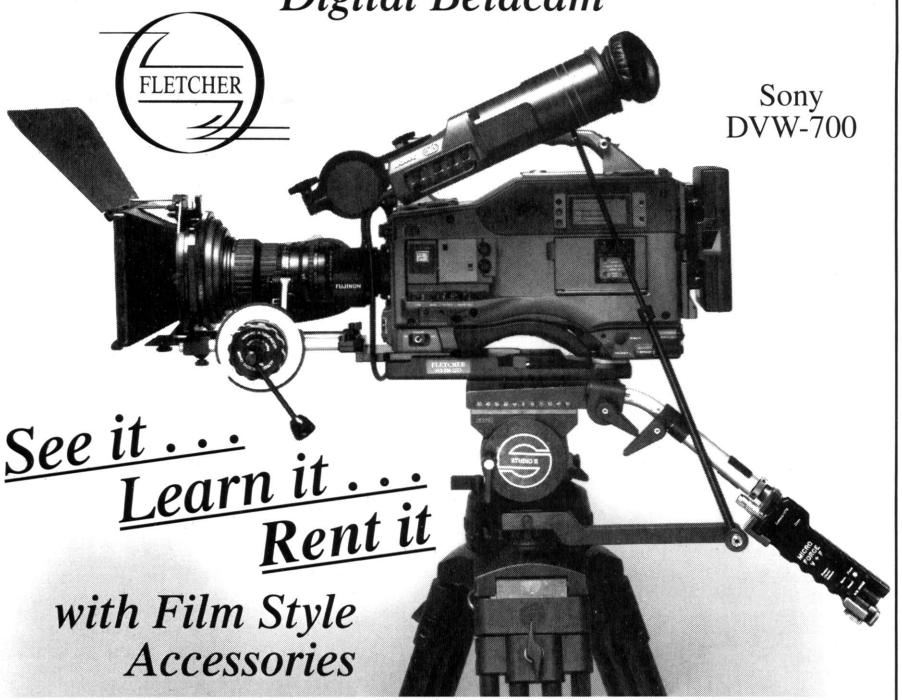

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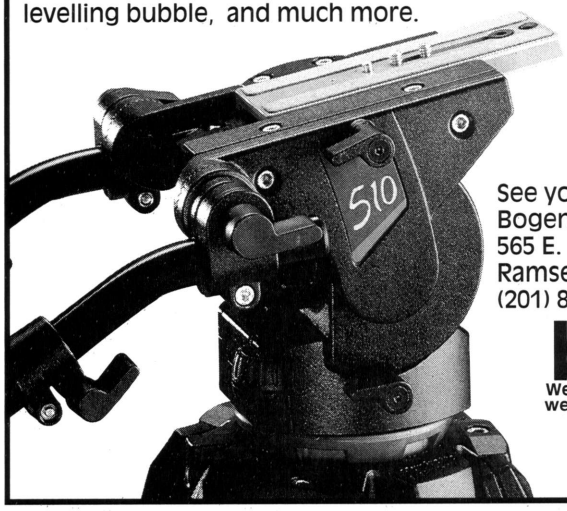

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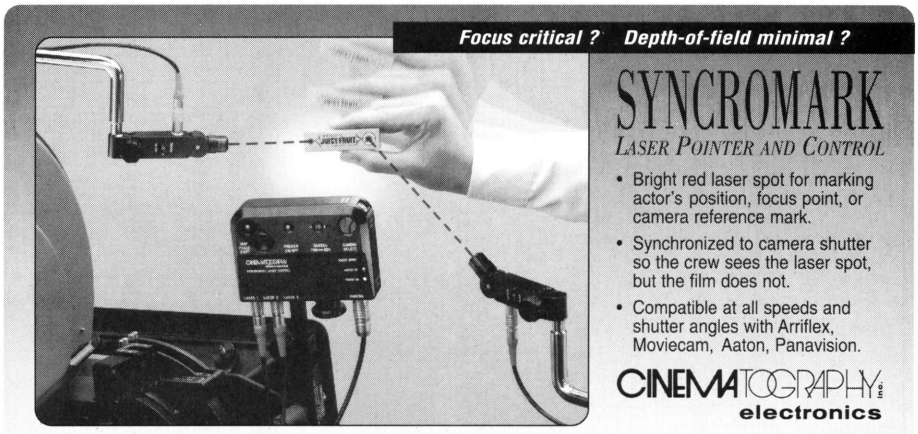
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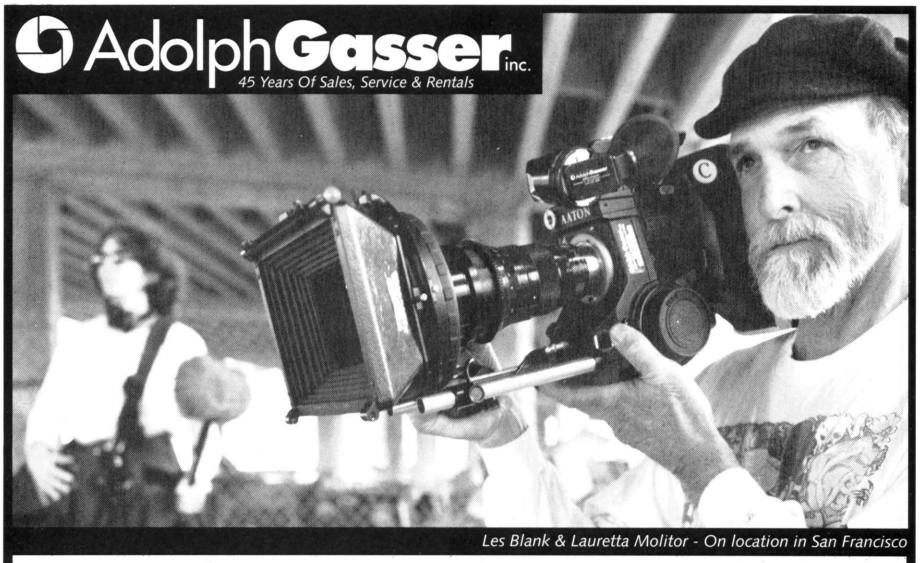

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John Thomas
Norma Jean and Marilyn

The central conceit in this newest telling of Hollywood's favorite tragedy is that Norma Jean, the titian-tressed orphan who grew up to be Marilyn Monroe, lives on as the conscience of the movie star. Although she shows up onscreen, Norma Jean is only visible to Marilyn. No effects were used to sell the idea — it was all conveyed with acting. "It was kind of interesting in that we tried not to do any real tricks," says cinematographer John Thomas. "The audience caught on pretty quickly that no one else could see Ashley Judd, who plays Norma Jean."

Thomas enjoyed the opportunity to emulate 1950s-style Hollywood cinematography. "It's so rare to have a chance to use hard light," he says. "We took studio 10Ks and blasted people in the face. It was great; I just loved it. At the same time, we had to be careful with the close-ups. Here were two actresses trying to be Marilyn. We had to simulate that look without being too brutal. We used a little bit of diffusion to get that glamor look, but it wasn't anything over the top at all."

Thomas' grasp of the material was greatly enhanced by a clip book put together for director Tim Fywell by production designer Cynthia Charette. "The book was a scene-by-scene breakdown of the show, including a lot of color Xeroxes, fabric clippings, and photos that conveyed the basic idea or feeling of each scene, based on Cynthia's discussions with Tim and their research. It was very helpful. It was a treat to work with Cynthia. I still have the book at home."

Thomas, a graduate of NYU's film school, won a 1995 Independent Spirit Award for Best Cinematography for his work on the feature *Barcelona*. His other big-screen credits include *Metropolitan*, *The Night We Never Met*, *Venus Rising*, *Under the Bridge*, *Palookaville*, *Freeway* and *Still Breathing*. — D.H.

◆

Primetime Stock Enhances the Airwaves

Kodak's television emulsion helps small-screen cinematographers achieve a wider range of imagery by affording greater latitude in telecine.

by David Heuring

As any cinematographer will tell you, the proper film stock is an essential ingredient in any cinematic endeavor. But the increasing importance of postproduction tools has also become a major consideration, one that Eastman Kodak addressed last year in developing its EXR Primetime 640T film. Designed specifically for teleproduction, the film is the result of multiple focus groups that Kodak conducted with cinematographers, postproduction experts and producers.

Since its introduction, Primetime has been put to the test by the industry's top directors of photography, who agreed to offer their assessments for this teleproduction-oriented edition of *AC*.

"Ansel Adams said that the negative is the score, and the print is the performance," says cinematographer Robert Primes, ASC, who won an Emmy last year for his stellar work on the telefilm *My Antonia*. "Capturing the image is only half of the creative process. The telecine and digital tools should be seen as the cinematographer's darkroom, and Kodak's Primetime stock takes cinematography further in that direction. It holds more latitude than you normally want or need, because it's recording for what the telecine can do. The result is that you gain an awful lot of creative freedom and control in telecine."

> "Capturing the image is only half of the creative process. The telecine and digital tools should be seen as the cinematographer's darkroom, and Kodak's Primetime stock takes cinematography further in that direction."
>
> — Robert Primes, ASC

Peggy Clark, Kodak's Worldwide Segment Manager for Television, adds that other factors also contributed to the development of the stock. "We all know that time is money in television production, and Primetime was designed with that in mind. The recommended EI rating of 640T allows greater flexibility in available-light situations, and better depth of field in low-key situations. Since the film is calibrated to the telecine, the transfer process is speeded up. And, of course, faster film can mean an extended shooting day."

The research project generated three patents. In the past, emulsions had to be designed to work with print films, which see color in a fundamentally different way than the CCD arrays in today's telecines. The result was a compromise — the telecine operator and tape-to-tape correction had to make up for inaccuracies. The new emulsion is designed to reproduce color in ways that play to the telecine's strengths. In other words, the colorist should have to make fewer changes to compensate for the way the telecine sees the negative. Clark says that the colorist is less likely to be "backed into a corner." It was also expected that the reduced need for tweaking would leave more time and latitude for manipulating the images for creative purposes.

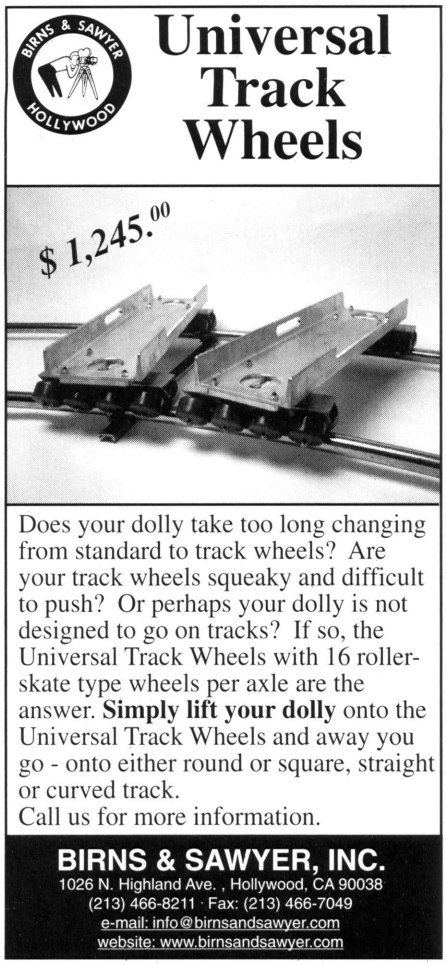
Cinematographers and telecine operators agree that Primetime takes some getting used to, and the stock did require some fine-tuning during its first year on the market. Today, however, a growing number of television directors of photography are finding that the film broadens their creative range in a number of ways. The film is currently available only in the United States and Canada in 35mm format.

Tom Del Ruth, ASC used Primetime on *Chasing the Dragon*, a Lifetime Channel made-for-television movie about a middle-class woman's descent into heroin addiction. In the film, Markie Post (*Night Court, Hearts Afire*) plays Gwen, a single mother coping with the twin pressures of raising a 12-year-old son and handling her job at a computer software design firm.

Gwen's transition from stressed-out professional to desperate addict is highlighted by the style Del Ruth uses to paint each scene, from the soft lighting in the early part of the movie to the harsh streetlights that illuminate scenes in which Post's character deals with drug pushers.

Del Ruth was first introduced to the stock while shooting the pilot for the TV series *Courthouse*, and was impressed with its imaging characteristics. "I thought the film's latitude was very interesting, and that I could use it," he explains. "It holds colors very well, and you have a tremendous amount of manipulation available to saturate or desaturate colors as you need it."

He adds, "In television, you have budgetary restrictions. You can't always neutralize a window to bring the image into photographic balance. You can use the overexposure latitude of the film to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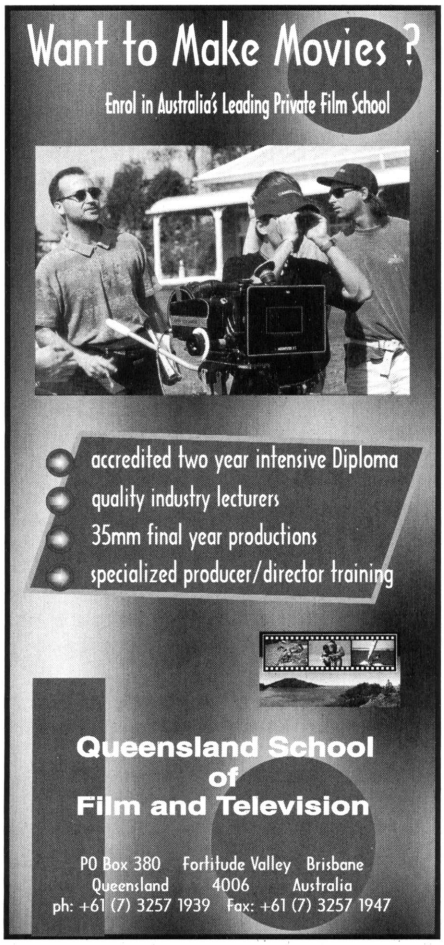
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create extremely bright or very dark images. On this project, I could hold bright exteriors in balance without having to augment the foreground illumination or reduce the light through a window because of that. I knew I had a tremendous amount of contrast range, so I could take the shadow areas down into black and keep the mid-ranges where I wanted them — I could work without fear that there would be a lot of 'noise' in the transfer."

After tests revealed Primetime's flexibility, John Connor and used the stock to photograph two *Cagney & Lacey* movies-of-the-week at once. "I tested 800 feet of Primetime," Connor recalls. "I put it through some rigorous tests involving contrast ratios, and it performed remarkably well. Based on the results, we made the choice and then pushed the envelope in every scene. I did things that I would have hesitated to try with conventional shooting.

"Normally I shoot two and a half stops key-to-fill to give me a really basic contrast of light and dark," he continues. "On this film, though, I was able to go three and a half stops before things went black on the fill side. So therefore, there were situations when I would shoot in available light and the ambient light would carry the fill. That was all I needed, and the resulting look was what I had initially wanted when I talked with the director. I was able to achieve it without adding a lot of fill."

According to Connor, the best aspect of the new emulsion was that it allowed him the time to do his job well. "Spending less time lighting gave us a better show aesthetically," he submits. "We were able to translate that time into quality both dramatically and visually. Therefore, the director could have every shot that he wanted. He very seldom had to make a concession because we couldn't get a shot in time. The show stands up dramatically and visually, and it has a beautiful texture. That's what it's all about. Some of those shots were very, very important to keep the suspense alive for the audience, and some of them couldn't have been done without the Primetime."

Connor also shot *The Marshall* on Primetime; other credits include *China Beach, The Young Riders* and *I'll Fly Away.*

Kenneth Zunder, ASC shot an entire season of *Chicago Hope* on Primetime after the results of an offhand test convinced him of the stock's quality. Zunder's work on the show has been nominated for an Emmy this year. "It was the first time I had shot somebody backlit in Los Angeles with blue skies behind them," he says, referring to the prevailing hard sunlight and generally blown-out skies of Southern California. "I never would have considered using a film rated at 640 outside. There's no reason to — you don't need a film that fast. But we had some footage left on our test day, so we went outside and tried it. When I saw it the next day, I couldn't believe it. Now I use Primetime outside as well. I just neutral it down because I don't like a heavy stop."

> "I put it through some rigorous tests involving contrast ratios, and it performed remarkably well. Based on the results, we made the choice and then pushed the envelope in every scene. I did things that I would have hesitated to try with conventional shooting."
>
> — John Connor

Zunder, whose images have also graced *thirtysomething, Brooklyn Bridge* and *seaQuest DSV,* pushed the stock to the limit on a regular basis. He generally shot at an EI of 500. "I have a lot of scenes in an operating room, where we have practical operating room lights," he explains. "I'll be between a 2.8 and a 4 on the people, and right on the operating field where the hands are doing the surgery, I'll have [a reflected light reading of] anywhere from a 22 to a 45, and still have detail — it

doesn't blow out."

Zunder sees advantages in underexposure as well. "The underexposed side stays pretty true to the fleshtones," he says. "You don't get the blue cast that you sometimes get with other stocks, and you don't get the red cast either."

Shaley Brooks, the telecine operator who transferred Zunder's footage all season, had this to say: "I did the transfer on a BTS [telecine]. Since the difference in the blue channel is so great, the amount that the blue channel on the BTS was putting in was 30 or 40 units too high. So we added a switch on the blue correction amp on the BTS.

"Once we did that, it came to life. It was incredible. The gammas were the most noticeable difference I saw — in the amount of range we were able to get out of it, and the amount we actually had to get into our gamma, as opposed to a 'normal' negative. With this vast amount of range, we were able to manipulate the signal quite a bit without compromising — we could get many different looks out of the same thing. If they wanted to do day-for-night, it would be pretty easy, because of the range that's in there.

"I was able to get a nice contrasty look from it in general," says Brooks. "The amount of range I was able to get, while keeping detail at both ends, [was significant] — it seemed [as if] there was more room to go before it crushed, that there was more information to play with. [The footage] was exposed really well, too, which helped a lot."

Robert Primes, ASC has used Primetime on two shows, *The Pastor's Wife* and *All Together Now*. The latter show, notes Primes, "had an ensemble cast with ordinary people doing ordinary things. It was a sentimental show, and it involved expressing faces — moods, thoughts and feelings — visually. I rated the film at 500. I found the film to have a very smooth response. It was virtually grain-free, even when we freeze-framed it on the monitor during the D1 to Digital Beta transfer. I found that a little fill went a long

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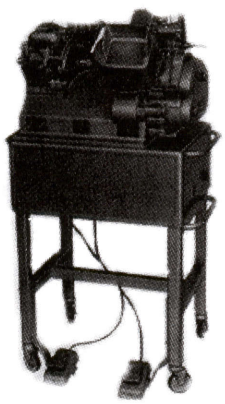

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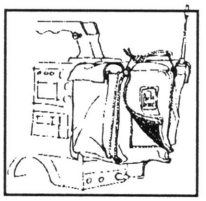

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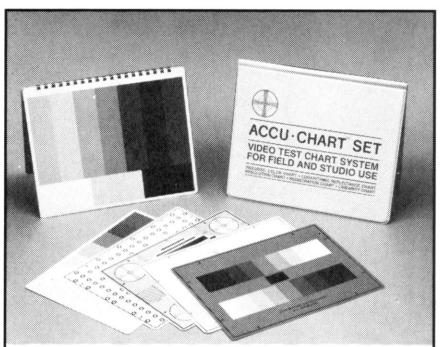

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way. We had no trouble bringing the blacks up or making it contrasty. It was a very clean look. The Primetime stock performed just as advertised."

Primes emphasizes the wide latitude of the film, while praising the additional artistic control afforded in post. "The secret of telecine is to have a very, very flat negative," he says, "The information is still there. This allows you to put in as much contrast as you want. That's the way Primetime works — it has a flatter gamma, so it holds more latitude. It doesn't kill the whites or the blacks, and that allows you an enormous amount of latitude. You can do just about whatever you want to in telecine."

Cinematographer Dan Mindel used the stock on the TV movie *Dangerous Minds*. He found himself being less cautious about exposure, and more cautious about fill. "We really had to build the contrast while we were shooting," he recalls, "which is not a bad thing; I like to do that anyway. I found myself using no fill, to compensate for the film's sensitivity. After a couple of days, when we got the look we wanted, it was really easy to use.

"The guys who do the transfer from film to video have parameters that they have to work within," Mindel explains. "So the level of black, for example, is an issue for them. With other stocks, you can go too far, and not give them enough to work with. You can find that your look is tweaked without you realizing it. The Primetime is so forgiving in its latitude that they have plenty to work with. It was a really great experience for me because I do feel that it's going to be a lot more common in the future.

"We found on *Dangerous Minds* that we didn't really have a lot of correction when it came to timing it," Mindel adds. "It was virtually where we exposed it, which is interesting."

Whereas Mindel was building up the contrast, Bobby Byrne exploited Primetime's lower contrast on the sitcom *Mad About You*. "What I love about the film is the lack of contrast," he says. "I've

been saying for years that most cameraman are trying to tone down the contrast. Vilmos Zsigmond started out trying to get rid of the contrast. We've always used fogs, and LC filters, to reduce contrast. We don't need Kodachrome-type film for every application."

Byrne came upon the stock after shooting eight episodes of a Faye Dunaway project. "I wanted a softer stock," he says. "[Kodak] told me that Primetime was a little softer. I shot it side by side with 5296 and the Primetime was nice and soft; there were no reds and great skin tones.

"I'm very happy with the look of it," he concludes. "It took me about four shows to get used to it. I can make my own contrast or reduce the contrast right there as we're doing it."

A discouraging word can be heard about Primetime, however: James Cressanthus says it's too good. On the series *Nowhere Man*, Cressanthus wanted a grainy look for a flashback sequence and found it nearly impossible to achieve with Primetime. "You can't get grain out of it if you want it," he laughs. "Blowing things out was very difficult. The great thing about the stock is that you can really push the overexposure and hold detail. And it's very, very rich.

"The thing I liked best about Primetime is that the rendition of color is very accurate, especially in mixed light," Cressanthus continues. "It handles mixed light like a dream. For example, if you're shooting inside a bank building with tungsten and fluorescent fixtures, but you're also seeing daylight through the windows, you can get a very interesting balance on it. The stock is very forgiving of color shifts, and it renders color in a very naturalistic way.

"I find myself being more creative with the use of colored light when I'm using Primetime," he says. "I would often mix tungsten daylight and fluorescent [illumination]. For *Nowhere Man*, I had to shoot a lot of large locations with uncorrected fluorescents. I also used a little bit of magenta correction in the Panavision camera, and the film had no problems at all.

"I first shot Primetime on a pilot last year, and the first sequence was about a painter painting in his studio," Cressanthus recalls. "The painting had beautiful chalk, pastel and oil colors. The whole spectrum of the rainbow was in those paintings, which were in full light and shadow. The thing that struck me was how accurately and how perfectly balanced the color was. I just gave the telecine guy a gray chart and everything fell into place.

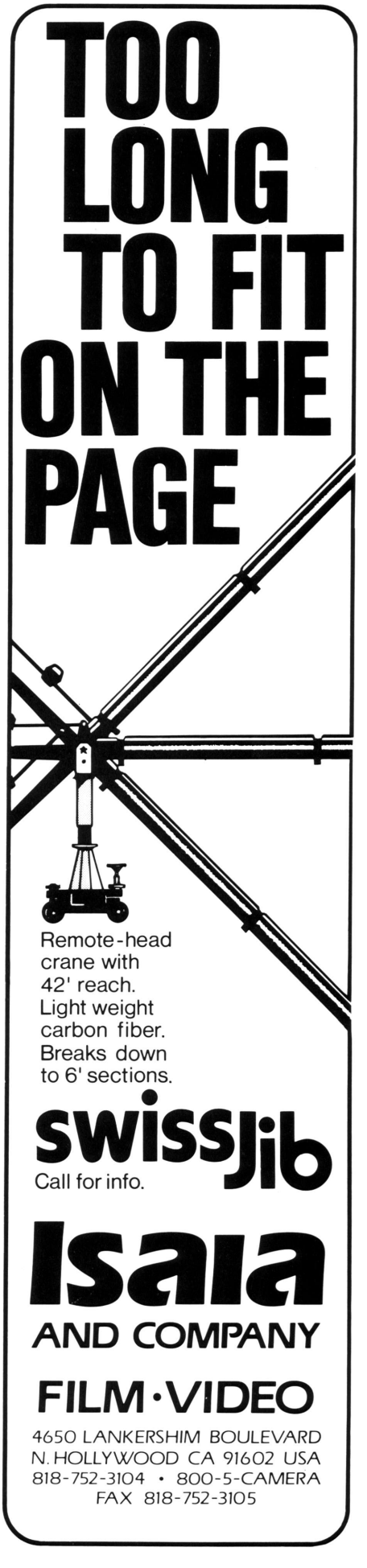
"The thing I liked best about Primetime is that the rendition of color is very accurate, especially in mixed light. ...The stock is very forgiving of color shifts, and it renders color in a very naturalistic way."

— James Cressanthus

"Primetime is a tool," Cressanthus reiterates. "It allows you to broaden your palette. We shot some really astonishing stuff on it. It really is 640 — I rated it right at 640. I used it with the LLD a lot — I'd rate it at either 640 or 500 with the LLD in low light. I shot a ton of dusk [footage]. We were in Portland in winter, which meant very short days."

Once the sun went down, Cressanthus found that it wasn't necessary to switch stocks. "We had some beautiful night scenes, some of the best night exteriors I've ever done," he says. "There was a nice thin layer of fog, and we were able to use very high Condors to backlight huge areas. I think I could have gotten an image on 98, but 5296 wouldn't have worked. I was not able to spot meter some of it. We were really playing the bottom edge.

"At 640 EI, with a 1.4 lens, it was really something. It basically looked like what you would see with your eye. We were getting close to a moonlight effect, and it was because of the Primetime. Other stocks wouldn't have worked." ◆



Revolutionary Images

Director Neil Jordan and cinematographer Chris Menges re-create Irish turmoil and tragedy in *Michael Collins*.

by Jean Oppenheimer

Nine years after giving up cinematography in order to concentrate on directing, Chris Menges came out of retirement to photograph *Michael Collins*. "It never occurred to me that I would go back to shooting," says Menges, a two-time Academy Award-winning cinematographer (*The Killing Fields* and *The Mission*) whose feature credits include *Local Hero, Comfort and Joy, Winter Flight, Marie, A Sense of Freedom, Shy People, Singing the Blues in Red,* and *High Season*. But the chance to work with Oscar-winning writer/director Neil Jordan (*Mona Lisa, The Crying Game, Interview with the Vampire*) on his long-anticipated film about legendary Irish revolutionary leader Michael Collins proved too alluring.

Menges' interest in the project dates back some 13 years, when Jordan first showed him the initial draft of the script. (The previous year had seen the release of Jordan's directorial debut *Angel*, known stateside as *Danny Boy*, which Menges had photographed.) Although it took the director and his long-time producer, Stephen Woolley, that long to get the picture set up, the two never lost their passion for the project. Neither did Menges, whose filmography demonstrates that he has always leaned toward films about real-life subjects, often set against a historical backdrop.

The fact that the filming of *Michael Collins* coincided with the recent peace talks between Irish Republican leaders and the British government gave the project added impetus. "We started the film during the cessation of hostilities, and the sense of peace moving forward was very much alive," says Menges by phone from his farmhouse in Wales. "We all felt that we were contributing in a small way." That hope was dashed in February, well after the production had wrapped, when violence erupted anew.

The biographical film cov-

Nationalist leader Eamon De Valera (Alan Rickman) rallies his supporters in the effort to establish a sovereign Ireland.

ers the period from 1916 to 1922, starting with The Easter Uprising, when British troops overpowered Irish Republican rebels and executed their leaders. Collins (played by Liam Neeson) became commander-in-chief of the IRA and helped formulate the guerrilla tactics which characterized Ireland's war of independence. He also helped broker the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, which partitioned Ireland. The accord sharply divided the Irish, and civil war broke out. The following year, Collins was assassinated by opponents of the treaty.

Menges' naturalistic lighting aesthetic derives in part from his days as a documentary filmmaker. The cinematographer has always been interested in real-life subjects, and has an intuitive feel for light and images. He is sensitive to the interplay between light and shadow, and constantly aware of

where the actors are in relation to those patterns.

Says Jordan of his collaborator, "His commitment to light and to the image is extraordinary. He comes from a documentary tradition, [which is all about] realism and natural light, but he has more dramatic imagination than that."

An example in this latest work is a scene set in a library, during which Collins converses with Broy (Stephen Rea), a government man hired to tail the IRA leader. Menges went completely with natural light cascading through the windows. "It's the most amazing library, with these big, tall, beautiful windows," recalls Menges. "It was built in 1701. We covered the windows on one side and just let the daylight pour through on the other. The rooms had such a great power. The light fell as it has for centuries, and the 16th-century books glowed without being exposed to lamp heat."

Says focus puller Alan Butler, "Chris tends to use sources a lot — windows, practicals. It makes for a very dramatic look."

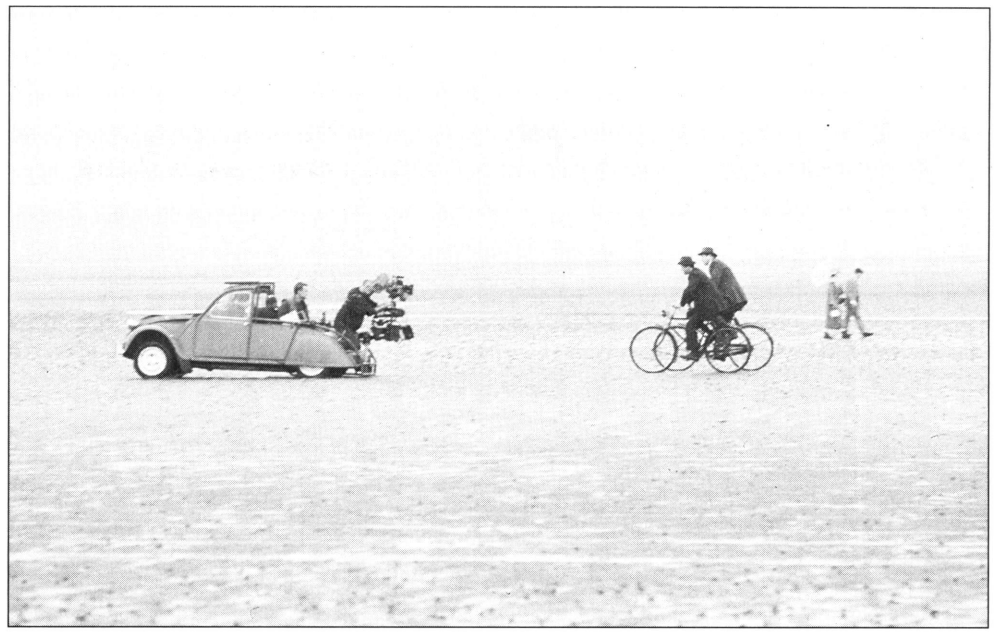
"It's also a question of freeing the camera," explains Menges. "If you have light coming through a window, you're never going to worry about seeing fixtures, which liberates the camera. If you light with practicals, it means that if you see the practical, it isn't a problem. You can put the light on an axis to the actor's face and not worry about hiding where it comes from. And practicals can be close to the actor."

Having spent more than a decade developing his script, Jordan had a very specific look in mind for *Michael Collins*. The director wanted to convey the epic tragedy of the drama while maintaining a strong sense of realism. Equally important was Jordan's desire to accurately capture the time period. That meant re-creating the grimy, sooty look of turn-of-the-century Dublin, with its carbon-arc street lighting and smoke from coal-burning fires polluting the air.

Architecturally, Dublin today remains much as it did in the early 1900s, with Georgian buildings dominating the cityscape and beautiful swan-neck lamps, erected in 1892, still lining the principal streets. But the buildings have been scrubbed and cleaned in the intervening years. Notes Menges, "we needed to find a way to turn it back into the gray city it was."

Three methods were used to help simulate the bluish pall which once hung over Dublin: smoke, cyan filters, and the ENR printing process, both individually and in combination. Technicolor's ENR process (pioneered by Vittorio Storaro, ASC, AIC), is a variation of the standard color positive developing process in which a small amount of silver is left in the film by way of skipping the final fix (bleach) bath and then running the negative through a black-and-white developer. (Similar techniques were recently used on *Seven*, *Stealing Beauty* and *Kansas City*.) "It takes the bite off some of the more obvious primary colors and slightly increases the contrast," says Jordan, who always felt that *Michael Collins* should feature the colors of olive green, khaki and verdigris. "It also enhances the silver, which made the bluish tint kind of pearly." Adds Menges, "The ENR process helped us to create a nearly monochrome image. The fine lab work was by John Enbsy and John Stanborough at Technicolor London."

For night scenes, Menges



Above: A pickup truck outfitted with a camera rig is used to capture a dialogue scene between Michael Collins and his friend Harry Boland (co-stars Liam Neeson and Aidan Quinn) on bicycles. According to myth, Collins often relied upon his bicycle, which helped him stay in contact with various IRA outposts. **Left:** ***(Left to right) Cameraman Chris Menges, director Neil Jordan and operator Mike Roberts plot a shot in the streets of Dublin.***

Right: ***Collins prepares his men for a series of bloody guerrilla attacks on British operatives. Menges often used the new Aurasoft lamp — "a soft yet intense source that also travels in a straight line" — to illuminate his interiors.*** **Below right:** ***Source lighting adds to the mood as Collins and Broy (Stephen Rea) discuss their secret plans.***

also could rely on simulated carbon-arc street lamps which, like the originals, burned blue, draining color from surrounding objects and producing an overall cobalt-tinged look. "The original lamp stands are still there," he explains, "but they have modern fixtures, so the art department designed [reproduction] lamp housings and put them on the existing street fixtures. We then put 200-watt MSR Kobald lamps into them.

"The housing is an oblong-shaped [piece of] steel, like a pendant, and attached to the bottom of it is a huge, circular ball of glass, like a fishbowl. At the top of this glass globe is where the old carbon arc used to be housed; that's where we put the MSRs, which are nine inches long, seven-and-a-half inches across and seven inches deep. They burn blue. The bottom of the globe was clear, and I put a cyan filter across it. At full flood I could get T2.4 at 25 feet, which was the distance at which a person might be while standing under the lamp."

In addition to mirroring the look of the period, the blue coloring heightened the drama. "It made things harsher, colder and less friendly, so there was more tension," explains Menges, who says he used Zeiss primes for the same reason. "I wanted Zeiss lenses on all night shots and most of the interiors because they have a hardness that I felt was needed for the story. This is a hard story about nasty things and nasty people. But it is also about heroism, so I thought, 'Don't romanticize it. Make it hard.' And the Zeiss lenses did that well. They gave the film a visual power."

Cooke zooms were used for daylight exteriors, which Menges says "were very versatile and helped us grab setups." *Michael Collins* was shot primarily on 50mm and 85mm lenses. Menges is not generally fond of wide-angle lenses, although he did use a few at Jordan's urging. "On the whole, I try to achieve a wide angle by going on a longish lens from further away," explains the cinematographer. "I felt that the 50 and 85mm lenses gave the film, particularly when the camera was moving, a dramatic sense of space and time to 'catch the moment.'"

This phrase harks back to Henri Cartier-Bresson's concept of "the decisive moment," that instant in which reality can be spontaneously captured. Menges is a disciple of the French photographer's work, and was especially influenced by a Bresson photo of the sculptor Alberto Giacometti crossing a street in Paris. He describes the shot: "It's raining and Giacometti has a coat over his head. I think that picture captures a moment of an extraordinary person."

Menges had that photograph in mind when he shot a scene of Collins and Broy having a heated exchange during a rainstorm. As a fierce downpour falls, Collins grabs Broy and pulls him into an exterior doorway. "This was obviously a high moment of drama and the best way to achieve it was in silhouette," the cinematographer explains. "So I back-lit the rain to put them in silhouette."

One of Menges' guiding principles is to have the light traveling toward the lens as often as possible. "If you can reflect the light toward the lens, then you really start to create some magic," he says.

When nature didn't provide a refractor, Menges improvised. The movie's two major battle sequences, the Easter Uprising and the start of the civil war, take place in and around Dublin's main square, on O'Connell Street. While most of the film was shot on the actual streets where the momentous events occurred, these two scenes, with their requisite explosions and physical destruction, were enacted on a huge, impressive set designed by Anthony Pratt.

"The entire set was designed to provide reflections in the darkness," says Menges. "All down the street, wherever possible, there was metal sign writing, glass windows, Edwardian grills — anything that would reflect the light into the lens. If you put the streetlights up and the moonlight up on the crane, and then added smoke, you basically could have light that was coming toward the lens — which meant that any action that happened in the street at night would be in silhouette. The

art department also put steel tram lines on the cobblestone streets [to throw out] just a glimmer of light."

"The tram lines were just dressing, not practicals," says grip John Murphy. "They were raw steel and they rusted between the time they were put down and the time we needed them. So we sanded them down and put some WD-40 on them."

The set for O'Connell Street was built on the site of a derelict hospital. Shooting on the real thoroughfare, however, required certain modifications. Re-creating the cobblestone streets of the period proved particularly taxing. Hundreds of carpet-like pieces of rubber, designed to look like cobblestones, were placed over the smooth surface of the city's present-day avenues. "Moving the camera presented some problems," says Murphy. "If we were doing car stuff, there were lots of vibrations. To counteract that, we used the Fraser dolly and we also put air mounts under some of the cameras to absorb some of the shocks."

Menges was wild about the Fraser, a new dolly made by Grip House in London. "The jib arm can come out the side and it can go incredibly low to the ground," says the cameraman enthusiastically. "It's such a finely engineered piece of equipment."

Menges also embraced the new technology that has been developed since he shot his last film prior to *Collins*, director Clare Peploe's *High Season* (1987). For daylight scenes, he used the 6K Arrisun. "It's a magical lamp," he says. "It is immensely powerful but the light travels in almost a straight line. It produces 1490 footcandles at 100 feet, with a seven-degree beam angle. When the beam of light arrives at the set you can control it with cutters very easily."

The Aurasoft, another new fixture, was used indoors. "It is a very soft yet intense source that also travels in a straight line," describes Menges. "It has a huge, 800mm-diameter reflector, and is switchable between 4K tungsten and 2.5K MSR lamps. Without thinking about filters, you can change your lamp head and change your color temperature. It

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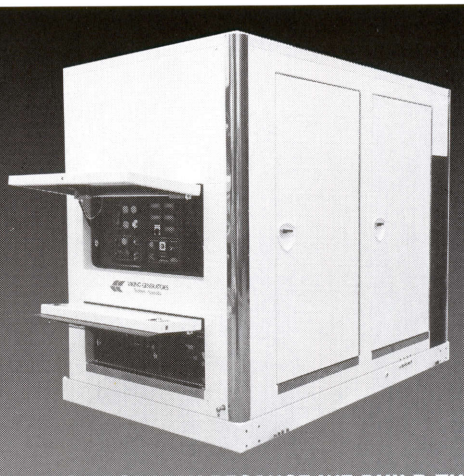

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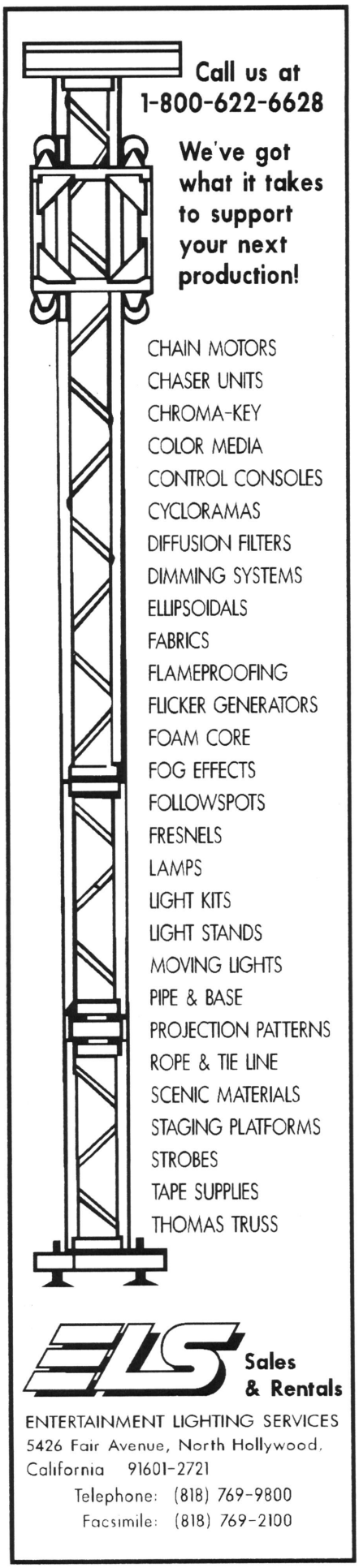

has the most beautiful-quality light. Its only drawback is that it is immensely heavy."

Night exteriors required some improvisation. Gaffer Louis Conroy rigged nine Dinos on a 150-foot crane and then put a one-and-a-quarter blue on it to create a moonlight effect (nine Dinos equals 216 Par 64 bulbs at 1000 watts per bulb). Menges reserved special praise for Conroy. "A cameraman can have all of the ideas in the world, but you need a great gaffer to bring them to life. There was nothing too big or too small for Louis. He was tremendously good."

Although Menges has regularly used Arriflex cameras in the past, he went with a Moviecam this time around and found it "wonderfully light and very quiet." As always, he relied on a Heden remote iris control, which operates by wire. "I like to have it available on every shot because it can speed things up enormously," says Menges. "If you have to turn over before the lighting is ready — or if the sun suddenly comes out or goes in — you can very subtly change the aperture during a take. I prefer it to the radio controls. The danger with those is your signal might be jammed right in the middle of the most brilliant shot."

Menges was impressed by the speed and fine grain characteristics of the newer Kodak stocks. On *Collins*, he used 5298 for both night exteriors and interiors, 5248 for daylight and 5293 for in-between shots, such as the library sequence and scenes that took place at dusk. But he emphasizes that there are no hard and fast rules regarding stocks. "You juggle your ASA around [depending upon] how much light you can get to create the effect you want. You may be able to create a light that makes everything seem real and believable, but you often find that you don't have the aperture to shoot it on 93, so you use 98." The cinematographer ended up using more 48 that he anticipated thanks to an unusually sunny, bright summer in Ireland. (The 13-week shoot began in July of 1995 and wrapped in late September.)

One of Jordan's first decisions about the film was to have a very mobile camera, something that is very much in keeping with both Menges' and operator Mike Roberts' approach to shooting. "*Michael Collins* is about a violent time, and Neil wanted to tell the story with a great deal of energy," says the cinematographer. "That energy often comes from the camera, but it's always in the service of the story."

"I like to put tracks down and see what happens," confirms Roberts, who worked with Menges on *The Killing Fields* and *The Mission* and has operated on seven of Jordan's films, including *The Miracle*, *Mona Lisa*, *The Company of Wolves*, *High Spirits*, *We're No Angels*, and *The Butcher Boy*. "Neil is like that anyway. He doesn't like to plan things out too much. I prefer to do one thing on take one and something different on take two."

Menges relished working with Roberts. "He's a top man. He never gets tense about a shot, but just sort of lives in the moment. And Alan [Butler] is a brilliant focus puller. If I was unable to give him a decent aperture, he would still make it work."

Dollies of one kind or another were in constant use on the film, while the Steadicam was hardly ever used. Quad-wheel ATVs were used for a shot of Collins' best friend, Harry Boland (Aidan Quinn), being chased by police through the catacombs beneath Dublin. Explains Murphy, "There was nowhere to lay tracks or even to use the Steadicam, but we needed some motorized system of staying with the actor.

Running with Liam Neeson necessitated a different apparatus. "He's a big, tall man," says Murphy, "six-foot-four or five, and for some of his chase sequences we had to incorporate a very lightweight dinky dolly, which is basically just a platform we could strap a camera to. There was no inertia involved; we could get it moving quickly."

Another scene of Boland being chased by police through a warehouse required a doorway dolly. "Fast movement was required, and to push a standard dolly at that speed would be almost impossible," says focus puller

Butler. "We used the doorway dolly when working in narrow corridors or just to get our speed up. We'd always go for the lightest possible option, and John Murphy would just run like hell."

Part of the myth about Collins is how he rode his bike all over Dublin, in plain sight of police officers who had no inkling of his appearance. The bicycle was his only way of connecting with all of his IRA outposts. To follow Liam Neeson around as he cycled, Murphy used the Fraser dolly. "It breaks down into quite a light little running dolly to get those low shots," he opines.

Perhaps the film's biggest challenge was to walk a tightrope between myth and reality, to present a believable story about a legendary figure. Jordan's overriding concern was to make the story real, to avoid a sepia-toned film of warmth and nostalgia. "He kept saying, 'We have to make this real,'" says Menges. "He told us, 'This story must be believable because it's about a man who was immensely complex, and the film is really about the complexity of what was happening at that time.'"

For Menges and all those working with him, *Michael Collins* proved to be a rare, and at times grueling, experience. "It's a huge film to have shot in 13 weeks," concedes the cameraman, who credits producers Stephen Woolley and Redmond Morris for their total support and commitment to the project. "They fought very hard to make the film work. They fought for the story along with us. They are great producers to work with.

"There are moments in your career where you are truly charged by the atmosphere of creating something that is uniquely special, something that you and your colleagues are privileged to be working on, something that is a living thing," he concludes. "Roland Joffe's *The Killing Fields* was like that for me, as was Ken Loach's *Kes*, Alan Clarke's *Made in Britain*, and *A World Apart* [Menges's 1988 directorial debut]. I felt that way on *Michael Collins* as well. We were driven by the possibility that there would be peace in Ireland for the first time in hundreds of years." ◆

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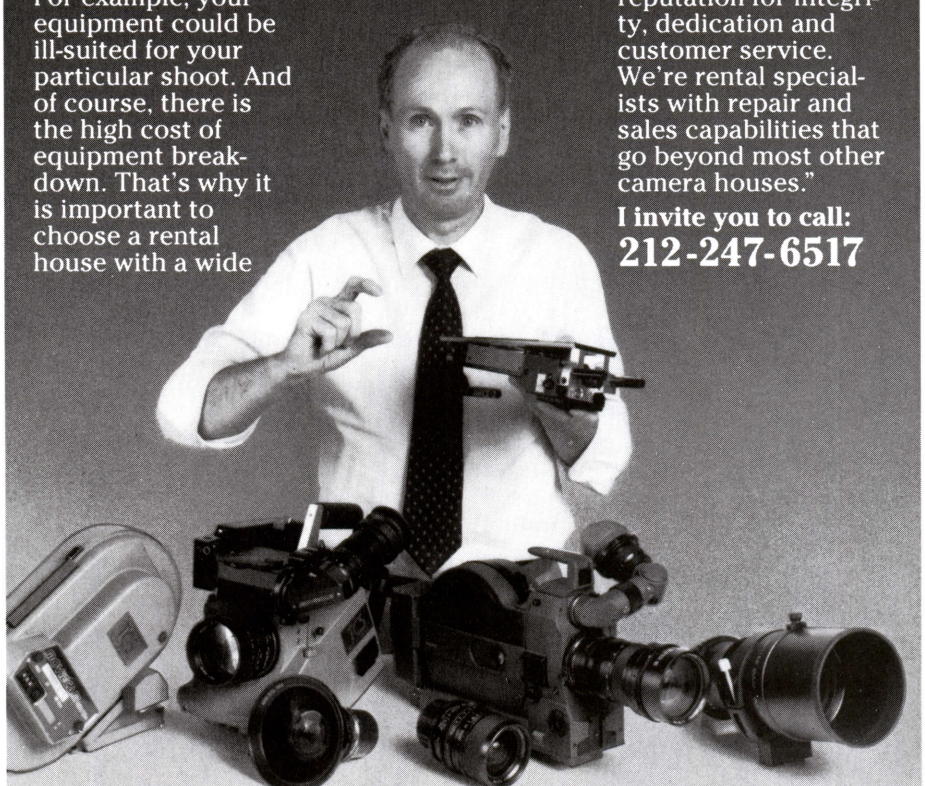

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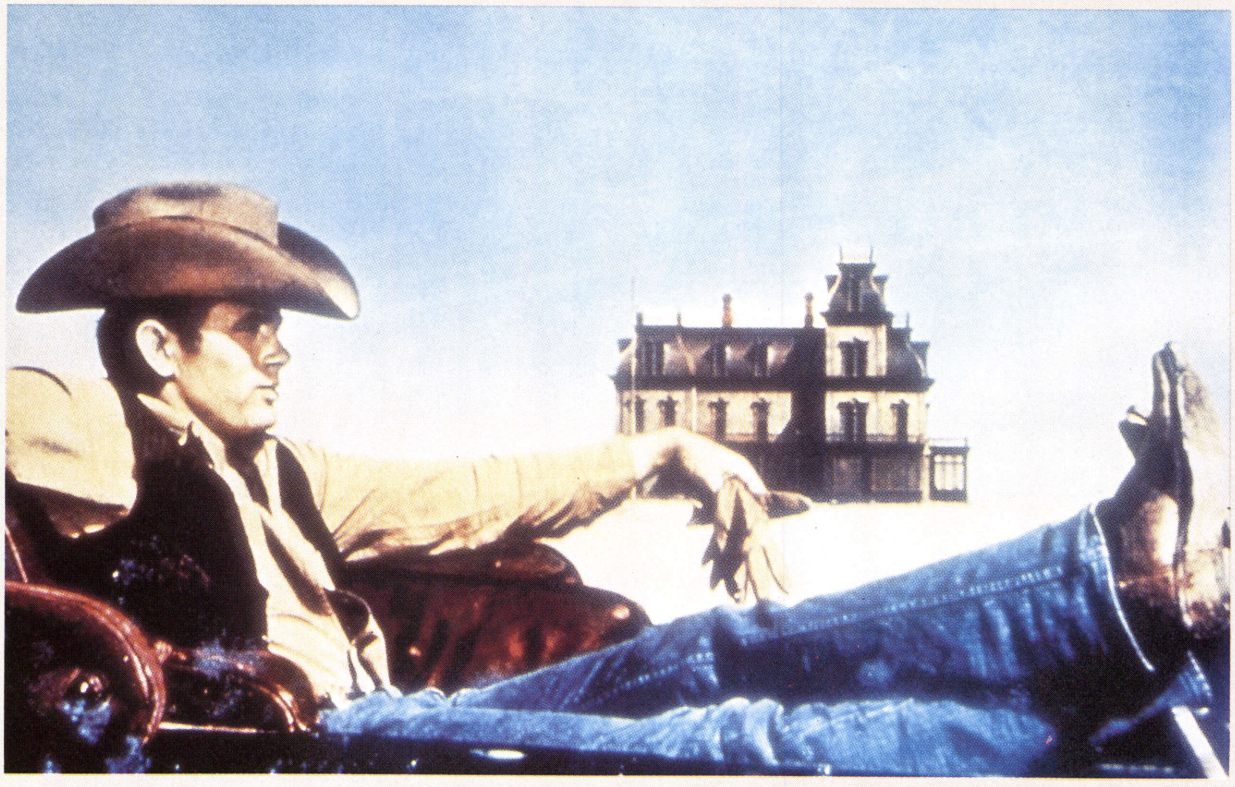
Giant Still Towers

Despite fractious relations on the set and a lengthy production schedule, director George Stevens crafted a classic potboiler that remains as entertaining as ever, particularly in its recently restored form.

by George Turner



Jett Rink (James Dean) covets the Reata ranch house.

It's often said that artists were born to suffer. There's no doubt that George Stevens, the brilliant producer, director and ex-cinematographer, agonized during the arduous production of his epic silver-screen adaptation of *Giant*, which has recently been restored to its full glory (see sidebar on page 90).

In terms of pure melodrama, Edna Ferber's 1952 novel is a fitting source for the cinema. A generational chronicle of a Texas ranching dynasty, Ferber's opus is rife with weddings, funerals, women's liberation, and caste and environmental disputes.

The film, which covers three decades, centers around Texas patrician Bick Benedict (Rock Hudson), whom we first see bringing his bride, Leslie Lynnton (Elizabeth Taylor), home to his 500,000-acre ranch, Reata. The cloistered daughter of a blueblooded Virginia family, Leslie is shocked by her new husband's chauvinistic attitude and the serf-like status of his Mexican ranch hands. To make matters worse, Bick's sister, Luz (Mercedes McCambridge), resents Leslie and everything for which she stands.

As fate would have it, Luz is killed when tossed from the back of a wild horse. Luz's will reveals that she has left a small plot of land to Jett Rink (James Dean), a surly cowhand who covets both Benedict's wealth and his wife. Jett discovers oil on his allotted turf and becomes a multi-millionaire. Benedict's neighbors soon sell their property to Rink, but the proud Benedict stands his ground. Benedict becomes even more embittered after his daughter, Luz II (Carroll Baker) has an affair with Rink, and his oldest son, Jordan (Dennis Hopper) decides to forsake the profession of his birthright to take up medicine.

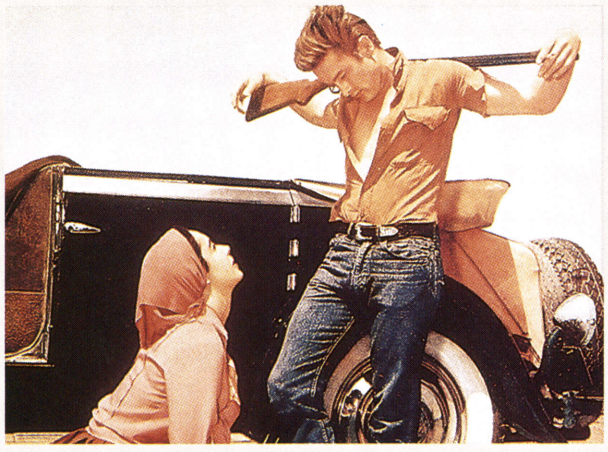
Many years after, at a banquet lionizing Rink, the honoree gets into a fight with Jordan. Later, when Rink becomes helplessly drunk, the elder Benedict

stalks off. Lonely and bitter, Rink admits to Luz that he is madly in love with Leslie. On his way home from the gala, Benedict is outraged when diner owner Sarge (Mickey Simpson) refuses to serve a Mexican family. Benedict engages in a violent protest; he loses the savage fight, but in the end wins greater love and respect from his family.

On April 25, 1955, after two years of intense preparation, a shooting schedule was devised that covered location work in Virginia and Texas, and studio interiors and locations in Burbank and Los Angeles. Stevens obtained his friend, William C. Mellor, ASC, as director of photography. The two had served together with distinction during World War II in Stevens' Special Coverage Unit of the Allied Expeditionary Force — both had received citations from General Eisenhower. In 1951, Mellor won an Academy Award for his work on Stevens' *A Place in the Sun.*

For the part of Leslie, Stevens' first choice was Grace Kelly, an actress whose spotless blonde beauty made her ideal for the role of an aristocratic Virginian. When Kelly proved unavailable, he opted for the raven-haired, violet-eyed Elizabeth Taylor, who had just given a fabulous performance in *A Place in the Sun.* The director's choice was a wise one, as Taylor's beauty and grace became dominant assets to *Giant.*

Above: ***Leslie (Elizabeth Taylor), Bick (Rock Hudson) and Luz (Mercedes McCambridge).*** **Left:** ***Taylor and Dean became friends during production; after learning of his death, the actress collapsed with grief and had to be hospitalized.***



In filling the other key roles, Stevens made a conscious effort to use actors who had not already been typecast in Westerns. The towering Rock Hudson certainly looked the part of a Texas aristocrat (artist Peter Hurd called the clan members Texas-Romans). Adding to this authenticity is the fact that Hudson is surrounded in the film by several such bona fide Westerners as Chill Wills, Monte Hale, Sheb Wooley, Ray Whitley, Fran Bennett, Max Terhune and Charles Watts. Stevens also solicited 10 genuine Texas millionaires to appear as guests at a ranch barbecue. In order to prevent the accents of players from New York and Hollywood from veering into caricature, the director hired Robert Hinkle, a rodeo veteran from Brownfield, Texas, as dialogue coach.

Casting the part of Jett Rink was quite a challenge. Actors considered for the pivotal part included Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando, Robert Mitchum, Montgomery Clift, Cornel Wilde and Richard Burton. A little-known "method" actor from Lee Strasberg's school, James Dean, had begun campaigning for the role, but at the time he was not being seriously considered. However, after Dean received acclaim for his work in *East of Eden,* which sparked his rapid rise to matinee-idol status, the studio decided that he was the perfect choice for Rink. Author Ferber was horrified — she had thought of Rink as tall and husky, which Dean was not. In the novel, however, Rink is depicted as being "all right when he behaves himself. When he drinks he goes kind of crazy. He's a kind of genius, Jett is. He's got a grudge against the world. He'll probably end up a billionaire — or in the electric chair. Put him in a car and he goes crazy." The irony is obvious; Ferber's description of Rink suited Dean more perfectly than the author ever could have known.

After the release of the picture — and Dean's tragic death in an automobile accident — Stevens stated the following about his volatile lead actor in "The Actor Jimmy Dean" (*Screen Stories,* November 1956): "Physically and temperamentally, Jimmy Dean was wrong for the part. Jett was a tall, powerful, extroverted character. There were a dozen actors who seemed more likely choices...but we felt that the part needed an extremely good actor, and so we gave the script to Jimmy to read. When he had finished the script he said, 'That guy's me, I could do that.' And he did.

"As an actor, Jimmy had the ability to reach people with movement. Using himself as a kind of clay, he could mold psychological impediments into his speech and into his movements. . . Instinctively he seemed to understand all the impediments people have when they try to communicate with each other. He never gave Jett Rink one easy moment unless Jett had been drinking heavily."

Principal photography on *Giant* commenced on May 23, 1955, while Dean was finishing his last three days' work on *Rebel Without a Cause.*

The Virginia location selected by Stevens for the Lynnton clan's home base, as well as the fox hunt sequence, was around Charlottesville, near Thomas

Above: ***Director George Stevens, Taylor and Hudson on location in Virginia.*** **Right:** ***Leslie and Bick in his ranch office. The calf-roping scene in the background was borrowed from a San Antonio hotel lobby.***

Jefferson's home, Monticello. These scenes were shot in 10 days by a second unit headed by director Fred Guiol, co-author of the film's screenplay and a long-time associate of both Stevens and cinematographer Edwin DuPar, ASC, of the Warner Bros. special effects department. For the sequences of Bick and Leslie's journey to Texas, a locomotive that had been in service at the actual time of the story (1923) was borrowed from the Norfolk and Western Railroad; the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad supplied vintage cars.

An historic estate founded in about 1730 by Colonel John Harvie served as the actual Lynnton home; the estate originally covered 2,500 acres and adjoined the estate of Peter Jefferson, father of the American president. In the fox-hunt scenes, members of the Farmington Hunt Club rode with Elizabeth Taylor, who sat atop Highland Dale, a magnificent black stallion who had played the title roles in both *Black Beauty* and *Gypsy Colt*.

Next, the main unit of *Giant*, numbering more than 200 men and women, gathered at Marfa, Texas (pop. then 2,799), about 200 miles southeast of El Paso in Presidio County. Along with the usual truckloads of location materials, there was the ranch house, Reata, which had been designed by Boris Leven and constructed at Warner Bros. The mansion was shipped on five flatcars to Marfa, then transported 21 miles to the Worth Evans Ranch.

Oil wells — with the huge, wooden derricks of the boom days — were constructed on the ranch. For the pumps, effects expert Ralph Webb, utilized a viscous liquid which photographed like crude oil. For the scene in which Rink's newfound gusher erupted, Webb pumped some 2,200 gallons of "oil" into the air per minute. Additional derricks dotted the landscapes courtesy of matte painter/cinematographer Jack Cosgrove, ASC. A Mexican village was built in the town of Valentine, 30 miles northwest of Marfa, and Rink's piece of crude-filled ground was situated some seven miles out of Marfa. Stevens had searched for the flattest, driest, brownest plain he could get to surround the 80-foot-tall Victorian mansion. Everyone soon realized that Marfa was not the most suitable spot for an extended picnic.

In Mercedes McCambridge's autobiography, *The Quality of Mercy*, the actress described the location as "a large part of the ugliest landscape on the face of the earth. . . No hills, no water, no trees, no grass, just vast acres of creepy-crawlies and dive-bombing bugs and bindy towns thousands of miles apart...It is located somewhere...in a region of the damned."

Texan cuisine proved even less palatable to McCambridge. Of the company's daily meals in the Alpine Hotel, McCambridge recalled, "The kitchen gave forth a stench of frying fat, 24 hours a day. Everything edible is fried in Texas! Or it is buried in the ground to cook before it is eaten...The steaks...are always afloat in grease. Next morning you are served a smaller steak, which serves as a platform for two

fried eggs, [and] all of this is afloat in the same grease... "

Stevens decided to let the public watch the making of the movie, and as many as 1,000 visitors congregated at the locale every day. Spectators, cast and crew got an eyeful of "method" acting on June 3, when Dean first arrived and promptly urinated on the ground. He then walked up to Stevens and said, "Okay, let's go — I'm ready." The director was not amused. A youthful Dennis Hopper demanded (ironically enough, considering his own future excesses), "Why the hell did you do that?" Responded Dean succinctly, "I figured if I could piss in front of all those people and be cool about it, I could go in front of the camera and do just about anything at all."

That episode kicked off the antagonistic association between Stevens and Dean. Friction between the two escalated in the ensuing weeks due to Stevens' method of filming. To provide good coverage for editing, the director liked to shoot each scene from many different angles. Dean quickly became exasperated with this time-consuming approach, which he derisively called "Stevens' around-the-clock method." Relations between Stevens and his star continued to deteriorate, with Dean often arriving late and, on one occasion, staying away for an entire day. Eventually, Dean's only remaining friendly relationships were with Elizabeth Taylor, Mercedes McCambridge and Bob Hinkle.

"Jimmy was never a courteous actor," wrote Stevens in the *Screen Stories* article. "If he had a big scene, he would do his best to throw the actors playing with him. This was not because of a desire to star. It was because he felt that the scene belonged to his character. Jimmy would also seduce the other actors in a scene into playing their characters the way he played his. If Jett Rink were supposed to loll and sway and shamble and the other actors were supposed to be prim and dignified and upright, pretty soon the other actors would begin to loll and sway and shamble too, and the scene would have to be done over again.

"Jimmy had studied at the Actors Studio, where the theory of acting is that each actor must lose himself in his part. Sometimes, an actor with this philosophy loses himself so thoroughly that he forgets he is playing a part. Instead of jumping over a couch and picking up a can opener as the scene requires, he loses himself tracing initials on a windowpane. This was not true of Jimmy. He kept the best features of this kind of acting, but he was also a calculating actor. If he had to jump over a couch and pick up a can opener and open a can. . . you could be sure he would practice until he knew exactly how many times he had to pry with the can opener. If the scene were then rehearsed 11 times, you could count on Jimmy to do exactly the same business with exactly the same timing at each rehearsal. At [the time of] his death he was not yet as good an actor as he might have become, but he had already managed to achieve performances that other and more experienced performers would not hesitate to be proud of."

Stevens' comments were kinder than those of Rock Hudson when he was interviewed by Ray Loynd for *The Hollywood Reporter* 13 years after *Giant* wrapped (August 9, 1968): "Dean was hard to be around. He hated George Stevens, didn't think he was a good director, and was always angry and full of contempt." Hudson also castigated Dean because the actor "never smiled, he was always sulky and he had no manners. . . And he was rough to do a scene with, for reasons only an actor can appreciate. When doing a scene, in the give-and-take, he was just a taker. He would suck everything out and never give back."

Actress Jane Withers recalled that she had offered to buy Dean an extra shirt after noticing that he had worn the same dirty sports shirt to dinner every night for three weeks. "I like this shirt," he told her. She volunteered to include it in her laundry, but Dean rebuffed her again with the line, "I like this shirt just the way it is."

Jett Rink contemplates his seemingly barron but oil-rich property, "Little Reata."

This tension-filled atmosphere didn't hinder Taylor from maintaining a sense of regal poise, however. Her demeanor was augmented by the fact that the young actress was always clad as a lady of exquisite breeding. Moss Mabry, a native of Charlottesville, had designed costumes for most of Warner Bros.' actresses and worked exclusively on Taylor's wardrobe for *Giant*, designing 41 costumes that represented some three decades' worth of fashion. For the Virginia scenes, Mabry adorned her in colorful organdy, chiffon and dotted Swiss fabrics. As Leslie matures, she is draped in brocades, velvet and wool dresses of brown, green and gold. Outfits for the other leading players were tailored by Marjorie Best, who had created the fanciful costumes for the 1954 historical spectacle *The Silver Chalice*.

Art director Boris Leven and set decorator Ralph Hurst redressed "Old Reata" twice to reflect the passage of time. There are no trees or flowers around the gloomy house at the outset of the film. The equally drab interiors are littered with mahogany woodwork and heavy Victorian furniture that's been gathered by two generations of Benedicts. After a few years, Leslie has painted the house white and had trees and shrubs planted in front. With a decor of Georgian period furniture, the home seems almost cheerful. In the Forties scenes, Reata sports a swimming pool and tennis court in back. During this era, the inside is replete with Empire and Louis XV furniture, crystal chandeliers, Venetian mirrors, Aubusson rugs, and contemporary art. One interior aspect that remains constant throughout is a painting in Bick's study of a cowboy roping cattle; Stevens borrowed it from the lobby of the Menger Hotel in San Antonio.

Mellor photographed *Giant* in WarnerColor,

Resurrecting a *Giant*

According to George Stevens, Jr., the directive to restore *Giant* for its 40th anniversary reissue was given by Peter Gardiner, vice president in charge of film and video services for Warner Bros. Gardiner consulted with Technicolor president Ron Jarvis about making new prints via the imbibition dye transfer technique, which Technicolor had abandoned many years ago. Jarvis agreed to print *Giant* by the dye transfer method and put Frank Ricotta, senior vice president of worldwide technical and engineering operations, in charge of the job.

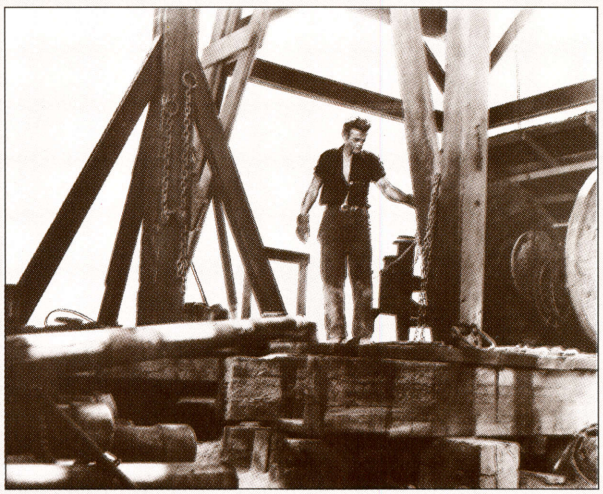
Says Ricotta, "What we've done is not really restoration. Our job was to make the best composite prints that can be done today using the unrestored 40-year-old original negative and the soundtrack restored by Warner Hollywood. The film was originally released as Eastmancolor prints made at the WarnerColor lab. A limited re-release was done in dye-transfer at the Technicolor Hollywood plant in the early 1970s. As a favor to George Stevens, Jr. and Warner Bros., we agreed to make a couple of new dye transfer prints using our proposed new version of the process, which is still in its developmental stages.

"From the original negative, we manufacture three black-and-white printing elements, called matrices, via optical printing. The dye transfer prints are then made directly from these matrices by transferring dyes imbibed into the matrices into a clear receiver film. It's somewhat like a printing process except that we use dyes instead of inks, and clear 35mm film stock in place of paper. We've constructed limited-capacity prototype dye transfer equipment that we've used to make limited demonstration materials which have been very well-received when screened for selected members of the creative community.

"The best *Giant* picture element that existed was the original negative from 1956. Although this was in 'reasonable' condition, it does suffer from some damage that occurred during the making of the 1956 release prints (some 400 prints were fashioned from the original negative before the separations had been made). Also, the film covers a relatively long period and utilizes many dissolves to indicate the passage of time. Due to the general quality of the intermediate stock available at the time to make these dissolves, they tend to be somewhat grainy and streaky. There is also some dye fade in these opticals, which can fade at a different rate than the original negative film."

Concludes Ricotta,"Even though it is a work-in-progress, the new prototype dye transfer process yields the best results possible from the existing elements because of improved contrast: whiter whites and blacker blacks, as well as improved [less] grain and increased sharpness. I must point out, however, that we were limited by the overall quality of the original negative as it exists today."

Compounding the challenges of the restoration process was the fact that the original soundtracks were missing from the studio. Says Stevens Jr., "Peter Gardiner ordered a worldwide search, but the tracks had disappeared and have not been found. The good news is that with the digital technology of today we were able to take the married tracks and make new tracks. Bob Litt, at Warner Hollywood, made a new soundtrack that is as good as the original — maybe, in some instances, better. When Dad was making the scene of Jett's oil gusher coming in, he couldn't get the volume of sound he wanted. The recordists said it would be distorted. Dad told them not to worry about distortion, because nobody would know what an oil well coming in sounded like. But the recordists said it would wreck the equipment. Now Bob has made it sound the way Dad wanted it to in the first place."



Jett at his oil rig–on the verge of a gusher.

Comments Litt, "There's not much you can do with a mono track with dialogue, music and effects all tied-in. Each of these [elements] affects the others: if you work on the music, for example, it hurts the effects and dialogue. We equalized to get more of a contemporary sound for today's monitoring systems, and we did a little cosmetic work on holes in the track. We wanted to widen the sound where possible so it would seem to go across the screen, the way it's done today. We added a bit of stereo effect, but [we could only] do it in scenes where there was no dialogue. We used some stereo backgrounds — mostly wind and open-air sounds — to give the picture a bit of a stereo feel without destroying what George Stevens had done. Also, we worked on the music for a more contemporary sound. I would have bowed out if they'd wanted a six-track version. There's no way we can say, 'Here it is! The new fancy-schmantzy track!' But it held up okay for the four-track theatrical matrix."

After a preview screening in Dallas, *Giant* went into theatrical release in major cities on September 27. ◆

a three-color process introduced in 1952. In the words of Warners' head technician, Col. Nathan Levinson, this process was "merely the use of Eastman Color film stock adapted to our techniques." The film itself was processed at Warner Bros.' own facilities in Burbank, New York and London. Stevens, who had been ecstatic about the Technicolor photography of *Shane*, began to worry when Mellor reported misgivings about WarnerColor; the most severe problem with the process was that it cast bluish shadows which sometimes gave players, including the ladies, the appearance of "five o'clock shadow."

In shooting *Giant*, Stevens and Mellor chose to buck the then all-pervasive trend of widescreen presentation by employing a 1.66:1 ratio. Cinerama had encouraged the adoption of this format in 1952 with their three-camera, three-projector system, and the standard 1.33:1 format was becoming swiftly outmoded. (CinemaScope and other anamorphic processes followed, with aspect ratios as wide as 2.35:1.)

Stevens and Mellor were among the holdouts who believed that height was as important as width in depicting scale. When *This is Cinerama* was unveiled in 1953, it opened with a flickering little image of a 1903 film, *The Great Train Robbery*, hemmed in by curtains. The curtains then pulled back to reveal the wide and colorful expanse of the three-screen system. When Stevens unveiled *Giant* at the Screen Directors Guild three years later, he opened with a CinemaScope short, with curtains at the top and sides. When *Giant* came onscreen, the side curtains closed slightly and the top curtain lifted, tripling the height of the screen and revealing a sharper image.

Upon the production's return from Texas, some interior scenes were shot at the Warner Bros. Studio in Burbank. The big Lockheed Airport in Burbank became Rink's private airport, and his hotel scenes were filmed at the Statler in downtown Los Angeles.

Dean had made an agreement with the filmmakers to avoid race-car driving until he wrapped up work on *Giant*. He finished his last scene on September 17, which freed him to enter an upcoming auto race in Salinas, California. Two days later, in Hollywood, he test-drove a silver Porsche 550 Spyder, which he then purchased on September 21. Actor Alec Guinness states in his book, *Blessings in Disguise* (1985) that on September 23 Dean displayed the sleek Porsche to him, only to have Guinness declare, "If you get in that car you will be found dead in it by this time next week." Dean merely laughed at Guinness' prophecy of doom.

At about 5:45 p.m. on September 30, while Taylor and Hudson were completing some interior scenes on the Reata set, Dean and mechanic Rolf Wutherich were in transit to Salinas when the Porsche collided with a Ford sedan driven by Donald Turnipseed at the junction of US 466 and Hwy. 41. Dean was killed instantly; the other men suffered only slight injuries.

Stevens, Taylor, Hudson and Baker were screening rushes that night when a telephone call from co-producer Henry Ginsberg brought the grave news. Taylor tried to work the next day, but was so overcome with grief that she had to be hospitalized. Later, it was discovered that Dean's dialogue at the Statler had recorded badly, so his friend, Nick Adams, was brought in to loop the lines.

Principal photography was completed in 114 days — 37 days over schedule, $5.4 million over budget and with some 890,000 feet of film in the can. Then began the long period of postproduction. Supervising editor Col. William Hornbeck, Stevens and cutters Fred Bohanan and Phil Anderson set to work. George Stevens Jr., who had worked with his father during script development before embarking on a two-year stint in the Air Force, returned to help trim the footage. The editors were bombarded by letters from James Dean cultists demanding that not a frame of their tragic hero be cut from the film.

Giant was finally released on October 10, 1956 — more than a year after Dean's death. Clocking in at three hours and 17 minutes, the finished product is somewhat long, but Taylor, Hudson and Baker all offer smooth performances. Former child star Withers, ending an eight-year absence from the screen, triumphed with her delightful portrayal of Vashti Snythe. As Luz, Mercedes McCambridge also strikes a resonant chord with her chilling take on soured spinsterhood. The film's finest performance is given by Dean as the vengeful young Rink; he's so good that he easily earns one's sympathy, even though he's the villain of the piece. Unfortunately, Dean never gets a handle on Jett in his later scenes as an old man.

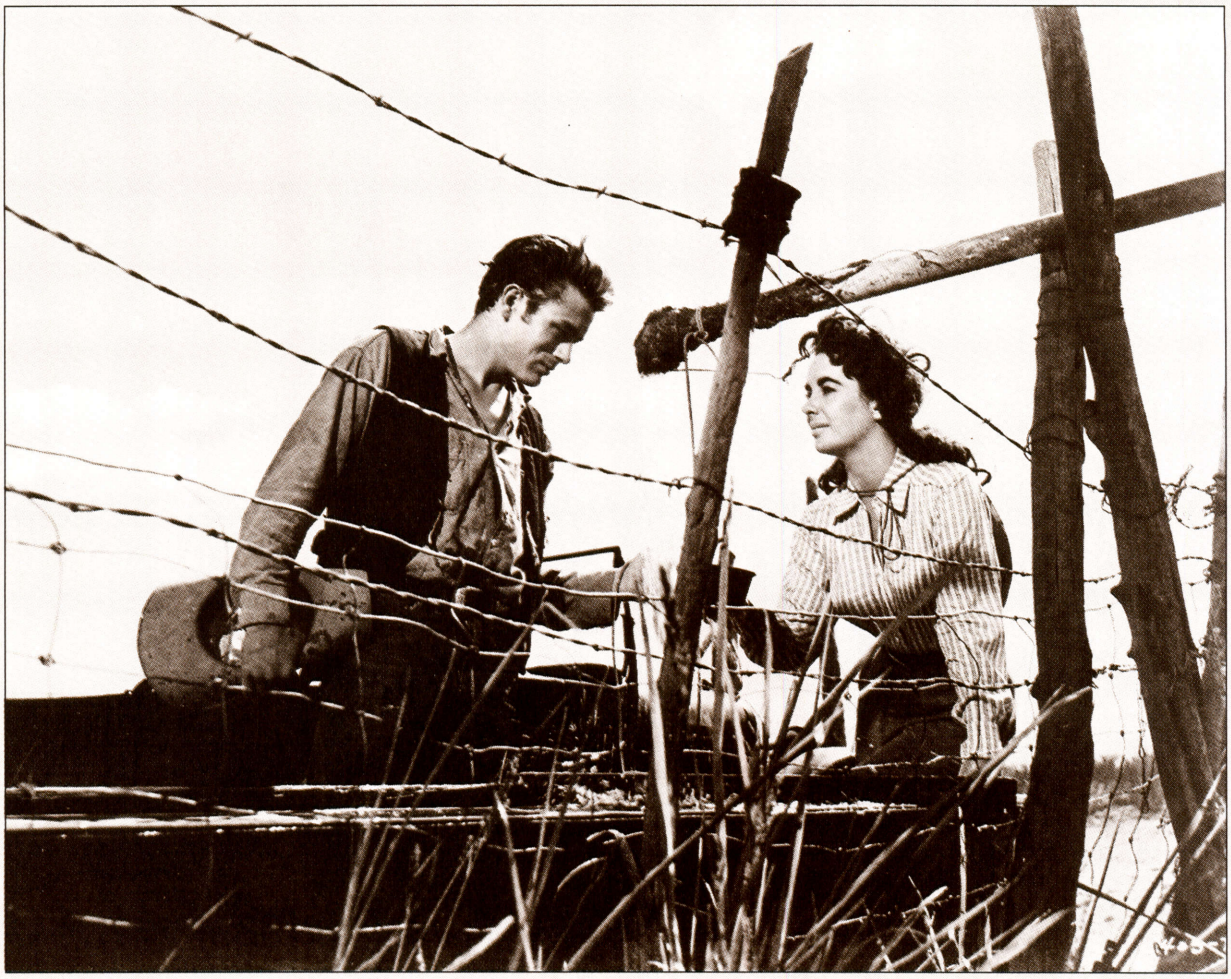
Stevens' direction is first-rate. The cinematography is also outstanding, even though it's sometimes marred by the defects of WarnerColor, the most noticeable being a blue cast in the actors' white old-age wigs. A fine score for orchestra and chorus by Russian-American Dimitri Tiomkin proved to be a major asset. At his best, as in *Lost Horizon* (1937) or *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) Tiomkin was marvelous, but sometimes his music could be a liability. His bold and rambunctious music for *Giant* is ideal for a picture about cattle barons, oil booms and fistfights. The title song reflects this aspect of the picture, while the ballad "There's Never Been Anyone Else But You" reflects the tale's gentler side.

Giant became the third highest grossing film of the year. Stevens won an Academy Award for Best Direction, and the picture also received nominations in the categories of Best Picture (Stevens and Ginsberg), Actor (Hudson and Dean), Supporting Actress (McCambridge), Adapted Screenplay (Guiol and Moffat), Art Direction (Leven), Set Decoration (Hurst), Film Editing (Hornbeck, Anderson, Bohanan), Music (Tiomkin) and Costume Design (Mabry, West).

Giant was probably the hardest project ever tackled by either George Stevens or Bill Mellor. As George Stevens Jr. said recently, "Dad and Bill never quite figured out which was tougher, World War II or *Giant*."

Credits

Warner Bros. Pictures *presents a* George Stevens Production; *produced by* George Stevens and Henry Ginsberg; *directed by* George



Jett and Leslie share a drink, but water won't cool the heat between these two characters.

Stevens; *screenplay by* Fred Guiol *and* Ivan Moffat; *color by* WarnerColor; *director of photography,* William C. Mellor, ASC; *music composed and conducted by* Dimitri Tiomkin; *songs, "Giant" and "There's Never Been Anyone Else But You," lyrics by* Paul Francis Webster, *music by* Dimitri Tiomkin; *production designed by* Boris Leven; *film editor,* William Hornbeck, ACE; *associate film editors,* Fred Bohanan, Phil Anderson; *sound,* Earl Crain Sr.; *production manager,* Tom Andre; *first assistant director,* Joe Rickards; *set decorator,* Ralph Hurst; *costumes designed by* Marjorie Best; *Miss Taylor's costumes designed by* Moss Mabry; *makeup supervisor,* Gordon Bau, SMA; *dialect director,* Richard Hinkle; *special visual effects,* Jack Cosgrove, ASC; *operative cameraman,* Frank Phillips, ASC; *assistant cameramen,* Jim Mathews, Eddie Alberts; *gaffer,* Richard Wilson, *best boy,* Warren Boes; *still man,* Frank McCarthy; *casting,* Hoyt Bowers; *prop master,* John Moore; *prop man,* Leslie Asher; *drapery,* Dean V. Lennon; *special effects,* Ralph Webb; *wardrobe,* Victor Vallejo, Ted Kring, John Noble, Sophia Stutz, Ann Landers; *unit manager,* Ralph Nelson; *assistant production manager,* Charles Greenlaw; *assistant directors,* Dick Moder, Buddy Messenger, Rusty Meek; *production associate,* George Stevens Jr.; *script supervisor,* Sam Freedle; *grips,* Charles Harris, Frank Lamber; *greenman,* George Stoltz; *recording crew,* Cliff Call, Samuel Goode, James Alexander; *makeup artists,* Frank Prehoda, George Bau, George Lane, Bill Woods, Edith Palmer; *Hairdressers,* Ruby Felkner, Pat Westmore; *labor,* Quentin Schroeder; *dance director,* Bob Osgood; *properties,* Weldon Patterson; *script supervisor,* Howard Hohler; *George Stevens' secretary,* Betty Coryell. ***Second Unit:*** *director,* Fred Guiol; *cinematographer,* Edwin DuPar, ASC; *assistant director,* Russ Llewellyn; *additional photography,* Ted McCord, ASC; *operative cameraman,* Wesley Anderson, ASC; *assistant directors,* Joe Rickards, Reed Killgore. *Running time, 3 hrs., 17 minutes. Opened at Roxy Theatre, New York, on October 11, 1956.*

Leslie Lynnton Benedict, Elizabeth Taylor; *Bick Benedict,* Rock Hudson; *Jett Rink,* James Dean; *Luz Benedict II,* Carroll Baker; *Vashti Snythe,* Jane Withers; *Uncle Bawley,* Chill Wills; *Luz Benedict,* Mercedes McCambridge; *Angel Obregon III,* Sal Mineo; *Jordan Benedict III,* Dennis Hopper; *Mrs. Horace Lynnton,* Judith Evelyn; *Dr. Horace Lynnton,* Paul Fix; *Sir David Carfrey,* Rodney Taylor; *Bob Dace,* Earl Holliman; *Pinky Snythe,* Robert Nichols; *Old Polo,* Alexander Scourby; *Judy Benedict,* Fran Bennett; *Whiteside,* Charles Watts; *Juana,* Elsa Cardenas; *Lacey Lynnton,* Carolyn Craig; *Bale Clinch,* Monte Hale; *Adarene Clinch,* Mary Ann Edwards; *Gabe Target,* Sheb Wooley; *Abrel Obregon I,* Victor Millen; *Sarge,* Mickey Simpson; *Mrs. Obregon,* Pilar del Rey; *Dr. Guera,* Maurice Jara; *Lona Lane,* Noreen Nash; *Swazey,* Napoleon Whiting; *Watts,* Ray Whitley; *Lupe,* Tina Menard; *Gomez,* Felipe Turich; *Priest,* Francisco Villalobos; *Petra,* Anna Maria Mejalca; *Harper,* Guy Teague; *Desubio,* Natividad Vacio; *Dr. Walker,* Max Terhune; *Dr. Borneholm,* Rafael Bennett; *Mary Lou Decker,* Barbara Barrie; *Verne Decker,* George Dunne; *Clay Hodgins,* Slim Talbot; *Clay Hodgins Sr.,* Tex Driscoll; *Essie Lou Hodgins,* Juney Ellis; *Governor,* Eddie Baker; *Guest,* Jack Trent; *Voice double for Dean,* Nick Adams; *and* Charles Meredith, Rush Williams, Bill Hale, Tome Monroe, Mark Hamilton, John Wiley, Ina Poindexter, Carl Moore, Ella Ethridge, Paul Kruger, Ethel Greenwood, Fernando Alvarado, Tony Morella, Julian Rivero, Maxine Gates, Richard Bishop, Davy Bishop, Steven Kay, Mary Ann Cashen, Georgann Cashen, Christine Werner, Judy Lent, Jill Lent, John Garcia, David Jiminez, Colleen Crane, Marlene Crane, Wanda Lee Thompson, Perfideo Aguilar, Margaret Trujillo, Ramon Ramirez.

Thanks to George Stevens Jr., the personnel of the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and Kristin Barella, for their inestimable help with this article. ◆

Filmmakers Chase Down Ultra Wheels' "Ice Cream Truck"

by Mary Hardesty

Since the unpredictable San Francisco weather often makes it difficult to match shots, director of photography Larry Blanford was relieved to learn that advertising agency TDA wanted to film its new UltraWheels spot, "Ice Cream Truck," in black-and-white. Before production began, Blanford consulted with cinematographer Janusz Kaminski, ASC (*Schindler's List* , the upcoming *The Lost World*) for whom he'd worked second unit on *How to Make an American Quilt*.

"Janusz had done a number of tests before shooting *Schindler's List* and found that shooting with black-and-white stock gives a grainier look than shooting in color and converting to black-and-white," explains Blanford, who eventually chose the color conversion process for its softer look and better gray scale. "Had we tried to go for a clear look, things would not have matched as well."

The cinematographer shot the spot on Kodak's 5293, leaving the 85 filter off in order to the lend the scenes a bluish tint. Since Blanford had to contend with constant changes in climate, this process aided him greatly. "Throughout the entire shoot, it was overcast, then rainy and then sunny," says Blanford. "I used carefully selected camera angles to hide the rain and then worked with the telecine artist in post to replace the color with a silvery light blue tint."

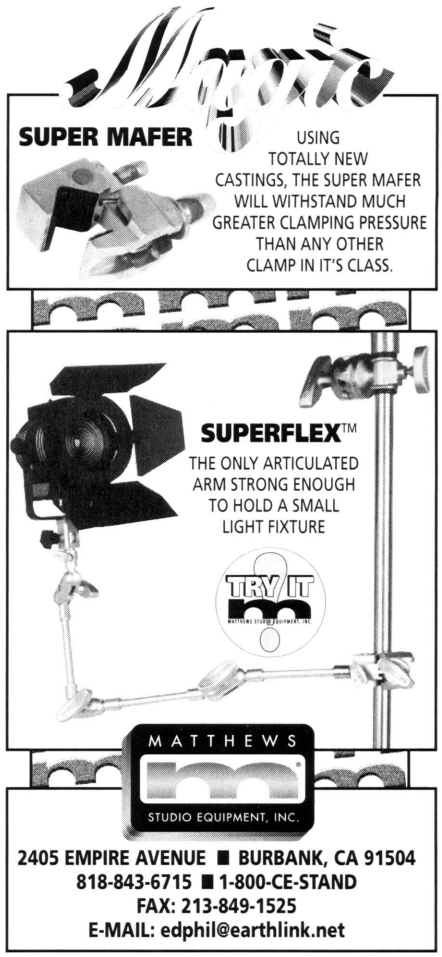
> "We wanted to create an entertaining chase sequence that would appeal to everyone, not just in-line skaters."
>
> — director Nelson McCormick

Recently cited in *Adweek*'s monthly "Best in New Television Advertising" section, the 30-second Ultra Wheels spot features a woman skater chasing an ice cream truck as it speeds up and down the hills of San Francisco. The spot opens on the driver snickering delightedly while waving at the woman. He then floors the accelerator to pass her by, and rocks with laughter as she tries to flag him down. Undaunted, the skater heads after him, and so did Blanford's camera crew.

Says director Nelson McCormick, "We wanted to create an entertaining chase sequence that would appeal to everyone, not just in-line skaters. The initial concept was to be much more aggressive in terms of action photography. We actually hired a member of San Francisco's Friday Night Skate Club instead of an actress, but the intermittent rain forced us to concentrate on the driver and not the product. I think this actually makes it more funny."

To keep up with the swerving skater, the director relied on Blanford, a cinematographer with previous experience in action photography and Olympic speed-skating competitions, and one with whom McCormick spent four years in the Air Force shooting documentaries. The director submits, "The good thing about Larry is that he has the right attitude. We get all of our shots, but he's always coming up with new ways to make it better. We play the 'Can you top this?' game."

When one of McCormick's 34 storyboards called for a low-traveling insert shot, Blanford and key grip Hugh Burn mounted a speed-rail and a small platform just above street level to get the right setup. Details Blanford, "I was down on this tiny platform about six inches off the ground, and we had an Arri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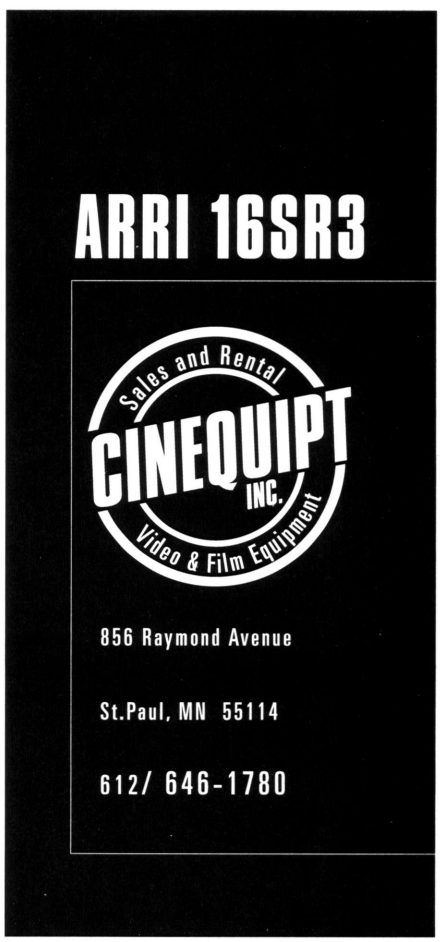

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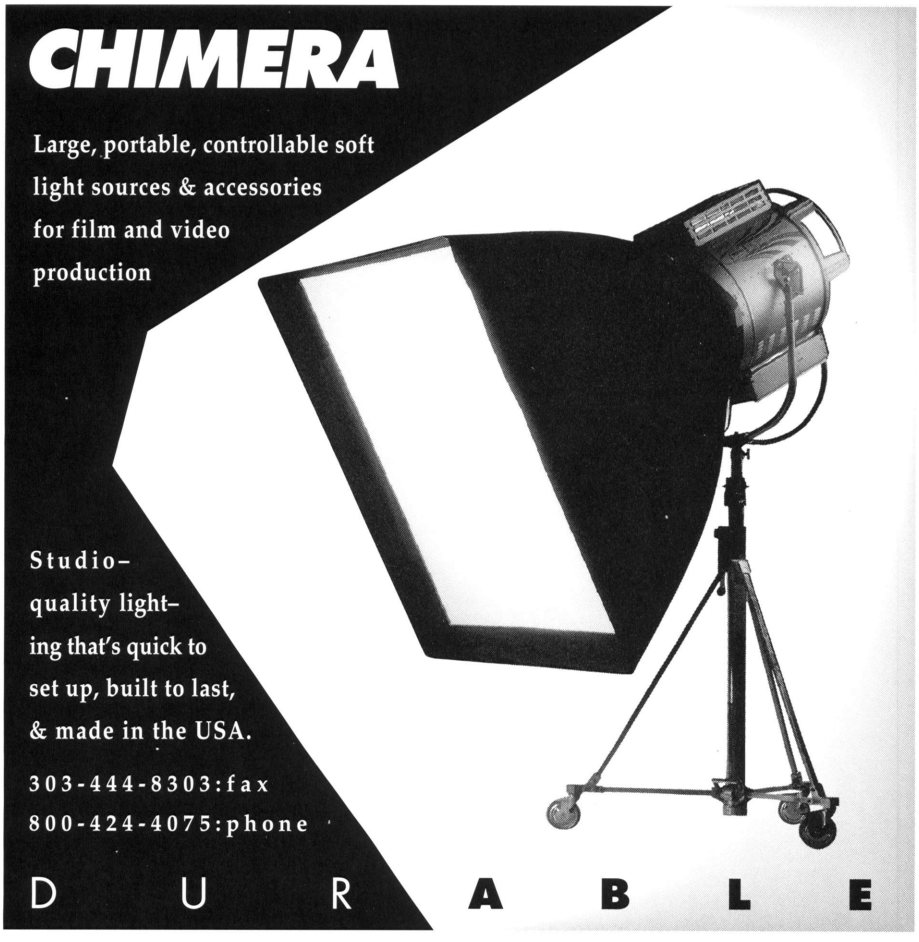
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III strapped on a sandbag on the platform while our skater traveled right alongside the camera car as we drove."

For an extreme close-up on the skater's face in front of a moving background, Blanford and Brown devised a T-Bar device to tow the skater behind the truck like a water-skier. Says the cinematographer, "Nelson wanted a 'We're traveling so fast, we can barely keep her in the frame' feeling, so I had the skater hang on to the T-bar and move her shoulders. That shot only took about 20 minutes to get, and I don't think it would have been possible to get any other way, because we were using a 300mm lens. Focus would have been impossible because the shot was so tight. I was using a 2.8 f-stop and had six inches in depth of field."

To keep costs down, Blanford spent a day scouting locations that could be shot from a number of different angles to give the appearance of multiple locations. Notes the cinematographer, "By turning the camera 180 degrees, we were able to use the same hill for the opening and closing shots of the chase sequence." Blanford also adds a word of caution about looking for suitable locales: "Always scout at the time of day you plan to do the shot. We shot in February, and I had to allow for the fact that the sun goes down very early in the winter."

Typically, Blanford favors Primo lenses, but for this two-day shoot, he opted for an Arri III package. "As we had so many shots to get, I knew we had to really keep things down to a minimum to cut takedown time, so I rented an Arri package, including a 10:1 Angenieux lens, out of San Francisco from Cine Rents West. When you are going from negative to D2, it's very difficult to tell the difference between some of the lenses, so it was easier to keep my equipment list at a bare minimum." ◆

Client: UltraWheels In-Line Skates
Title: "Ice Cream Truck"
Agency: TDA, Longmont, CO
Director: Nelson McCormick
Director of Photography: Larry Blanford
Production Company: Red Sky
Creative Director/Art Director: Thomas Dooley
Producer: Erica Churgin

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson

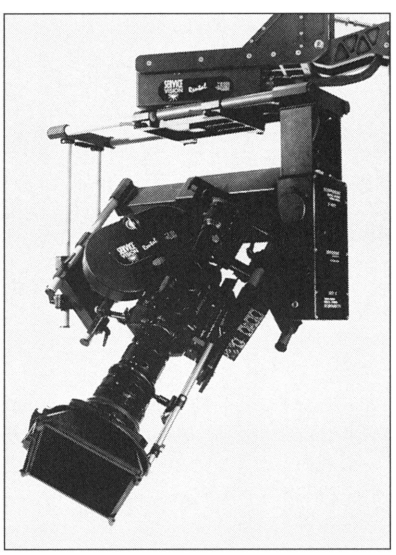
Felix Crane

Movie Tech's new Felix crane reaches a height of approximately 4.5m for operation with remote heads, and an approximate platform height of 2.7m for the version which can be ridden on. Due to its compact design and narrow width (62cm) the Felix base dolly fits comfortably through any standard doorway, and is ideal for indoor or studio use. The crane arm's aluminum box profile construction provides maximum stability with a minimum weight, allowing the Felix to weigh in at only 135 kg. The quick-locking system allows one person (without tools) to assemble/disassemble the crane within minutes. The crane's lightweight components and the modular design make it possible to transport the Felix in a station wagon.

MovieTech, (0)89-434081, Fax (0)89-4312961

Three-Axis-Remote Head

Shotmaker Dollies and Cranes, Inc. has added the new Scorpio II three-axis remote head to their inventory. Digitally controlled, the Scorpio head is capable of performing 360-degree continuous rolls at any head speed from two-and-a-half seconds to 24 hours per rotation. The head also performs pan-and-tilt movements, and all moves are programmable and repeatable. The



Scorpio II head can carry film or video cameras weighing up to 176 lbs. Handwheels, joystick or pan-bar operating are available, and the unit can be remotely controlled from up to 1,500 feet away. The unit can be used with various lens control systems, including Scorpio, Preston or Arri.

Shotmaker, (800) 426-6284, Fax (805) 257-6197.

Clear Ultra-Violet Filters

Schneider/B+W recently introduced its full range of "water clear" ultra-violet (UV) filters in sizes from 72 to 105mm. These filters are used to protect expensive lenses as well as to penetrate haze. To ensure sharpness and overall image quality, these filters are constructed from Schott optical glass that has been ground and polished for parallel thickness; a "hard" anti-reflective coating is featured on both sides of the filter. Like all Schneider/B+W screw-on filters, these filters are mounted in brass rings which add ease of handling for broadcast ENG

use. The filters' range of sizes — 72mm, 77mm, 82mm, 86mm, 95mm and 105mm — covers most Canon, Nikon and Fujinon zoom lenses.

Schneider Corporation, (416) 496-8500.

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Camera Essentials has a new line of rain and dust covers for cameras, Steadicams and both time code and standard slates. The Harrison "slate slicker" is a transparent vinyl pouch which houses the slate, camera report and dry-erase marker, and keeps them dry in any wet environment. The slate slicker can be used with any slate, and even protects electronic time-code slates from rain, snow or ocean spray. Camera Essentials also makes vinyl rain and dust covers for all 16mm and 35mm cameras and Steadicams. The loose-fitting raincovers attach to the mattebox with velcro, and have covered flaps to protect the eye-

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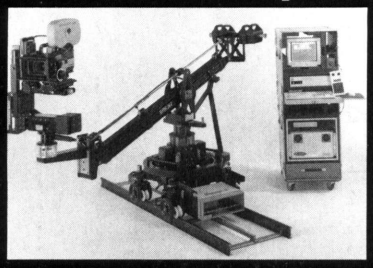

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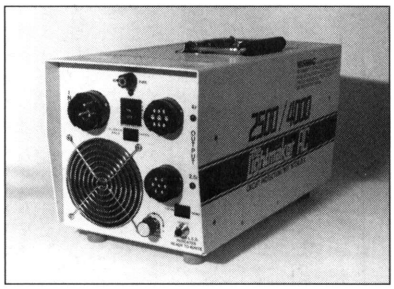


Lightmaker Ballast Features

The Lightmaker Company announces the addition of three major features to its line of combination ballasts. Lightmaker will now include a "circuit protection" feature in all of its new AC systems. This addition will aid in protecting the internal components from electrical "spiking" from the head, or short circuits in the cables or connectors which can result in system failure. This new feature will also be available to all current owners of Lightmaker AC and AC/DC ballasts as a low-priced, easily installed retrofit. Ballast with the circuit protection feature now come with a three-year warranty on the IGBTs, in addition to the usual one-year system warranty.

Lightmaker also announces the addition of a new "ready to ignite" interlock (RTI) feature to all of their new combination ballasts. The RTI feature is an immediate analog inspection of the cable and connector system up to the igniter component of the HMI head. There is also a visual indication of system readiness prior to ignition.

The ballasts will also include an "auto ignite" selection system that allows the operator the ability to dedicate the system to remote or local ignition. Lightmaker has redesigned the operator control area to allow for more convenient ignition and operation of the ballast. The ballast will not automatically override the manual switch setting and default to 24 fps when re-ignited.

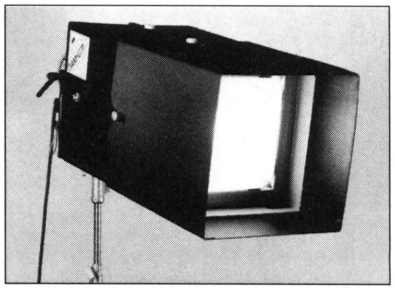
Lightmaker, (800) 426-6284, Fax (805) 257-6197.

Mini-Arc and Lamp Ballast

Welch Allyn introduces the Hi-Lux, a new miniature arc lamp and ballast for theatrical lighting equipment. The Hi-Lux lamp operates at 5500K color temperature and produces a very bright, white light output that is close to natural sunlight. It functions at 60 lumens per watt, creating light intensities equivalent to Xenon or halogen lamps of much higher wattages. The lamp can be used with optimally designed optics and customized reflectors to deliver the maximum amount of light into a precise area, from a very small pinpoint of light to a wider, broad column of illumination. Available in 18-, 21-, or 24-watt configurations, the lamp's low wattage and small size allows for portable, battery operation for on-location use. Due to the

lamp's high efficiency and low power consumption, the size of the ballast is greatly reduced (to 2.0" wide by 2.275" long). With a length of 49mm, the compact Hi-Lux lamp and ballast can service miniature, lightweight lighting equipment.

Welch Allyn, (315) 685-4245, Fax (315) 685-2854.



New GAM Products

GamLitt, a new, lightweight, portable softbox from the Great American Market, diffuses and contains directional light sources, and attachers to most Fresnels and many other lights. Designed as a cardboard throwaway with a telescoping snoot and gel frame, the GamLitt folds flat for storage and shipping, and is particularly well-suited for location production.

The unit is available in five sizes — 14, 18, 24, 32 and 42 inches —

and is also easy to operate; double-stick tape on two sides of the diffusion frame make it a snap to mount diffusion and color correction. More than one frame may be used in the soft box for multiple levels of diffusion, and the frame may be positioned anywhere in the box by sliding it back and forth. The outside of the soft box is black; the interior is painted with bright, reflective white paint. Each GamLitt includes a folding soft box, one folding snoot, one filter frame, three support rods and hardware and simple assembly instructions.

The Great American Market also offers the following products: the X3 Jr. Flickmaster, a triple flicker generator that has a variety of flickers, chases, strobes and pulses for realistic lighting effects; the GelFile, a database of technical and visual information about color filters that displays and will print out the dominant wavelength, purity and brightness of over 1,250 different gels; and the Shadowmaster, a lightweight and portable grip system that can be used with almost any light.

Great American Market, (213) 461-0200

Sony Progressive Scan Camera

Sony introduces its new DXC-9000 3-CCD color video camera, designed for a broad range of applications including computer graphics, surveillance and traffic monitoring. The camera's progressive scan technology allows the DXC-9000 to record all the pixels in an image frame in 1/60 of a second. This drastically reduces blur and captures clear, high-resolution images of moving objects. In addition, its images are recorded as small pixels that help to avoid aliasing, and provide clear image capture and manipulation. The camera can also output images in NTSC, allowing sports, motion analysis and other video-based application to take full advantage of the camera's high-speed image and capture capabilities.

Equipped with three ½ inch IT (Interline transfer) HyperHAD CCDs, the DXC-9000 provides high resolution and an outstanding signal-to-noise ratio. To allow the camera to capture images in a variety of lighting environments, it is also equipped with three white-balance control modes: AWB (auto white balance); ATW (auto tracing white balance); and

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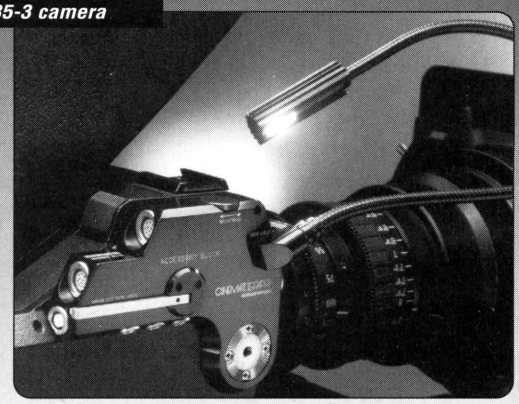

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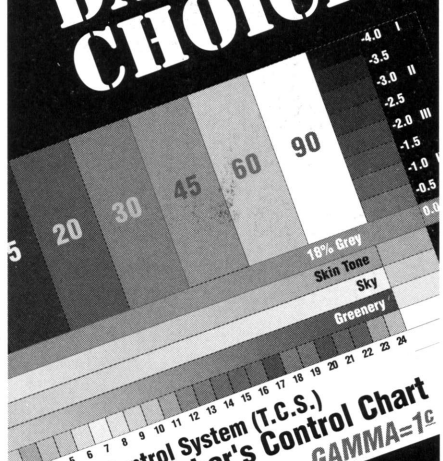

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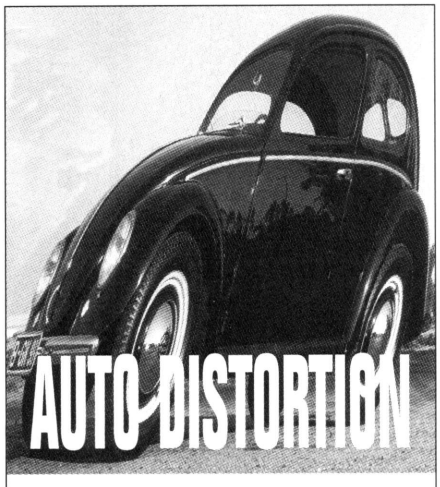

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manual (R/B gain). Designed to provide clear, high-quality images for computer graphics applications, the DXC-9000 also enables two freeze options due to a built-in frame memory, continuous freeze mode and freeze/source change mode. These options allow the user to choose how an image is captured and presented to the computer or viewed on a monitor. With a built-in RS-232C interface, the DXC-9000 can also be remote-controlled from an external computer using an eight-pin connector, making it ideal for remote viewing applications such as weather and traffic reporting/monitoring.

Sony, 1-800-472-SONY.

Film Tele-Scale

Dan Yarhi and Associates introduce the film tele-scale, a precision instrument that makes for quick and easy shot planning. The eight interchangeable scales are easy to read and take the guesswork out of lens field angle tables. The device works for the following formats: 35mm 1.85:1; 35mm 3:4; 16mm 3:4; 1 ¼" and one-inch Canon; ⅔" Canon; Super 16mm 1:85:1; 35mm anamorphic 2.35:1; and 35mm Imax 1.91:2.72. The protractor device gives one an instant reading of what the camera will see horizontally and vertically; it can be used on floor-plans, elevations and even on-location as a viewfinder.

Each of the scales features an "aspect ratio ruler" that shows one at a glance what the proper "in-ratio" dimension should be for any scenic element. The device is great for finding Translite, blue screen, and backing sizes; it can also be used for locating ceiling pieces, cutters, matte lines, in-studio camera placement. The original CAD drawings were done at 10 times the actual size, and each lens value was then magnified by a factor of 10 times, giving accuracy of four decimal places.

Dan Yarhi and Associates, (416) 421-0833, Fax (416) 421-5144.

Underwater Incandescent Light

The newest member of HydroFlex's family of underwater lighting systems is the HydroPar2K. This lamp is designed around the CYX single-ended globe, and weighs only four pounds in water and can be configured to any shooting situation. Barn doors and specially designed snoots are readily added

by simply removing the front retainer ring and inserting the respective accessory. Gels and scrims may also be added. HydroPars mate to a ⅝" spud for compatibility with standard grip and lighting equipment. For quick and easy adjustment of beam patterns, all one has to do is change the Fresnels. The 2K features HydroFlex's custom underwater mateable connectors that prevent electrical accidents by incorporating the "mate first/break last" grounding circuit. Powered by AC or DC, the 2K is supplied with an integrated ground fault sensor (GFCI) when using AC current or the appropriate adapter for DC current.

HydroFlex, (310) 301-8187, Fax (310) 821-9886.

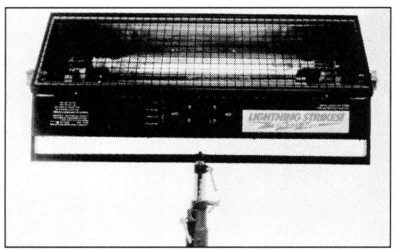
Softshell Production Cases

Kata introduces its new series of Banana soft cases, which are contoured to make carrying equipment easier. The design of these roomy, heavy-duty production carry-alls hug the torso, bringing the center of gravity closer to the body and evenly distributing the weight of the gear. Four different models present a range of sizes and features including: movable/removable dividers; zippered mesh pockets in the lid that provide a clear view of accessories and other items; and expanding, zippered pockets and a flap pocket on the outside. A tough Cordura exterior, heavy foam padding and aluminum panel reinforcements protect delicate equipment.

The Banana's padded handles

have extra-long handgrips for a comfortable feel. Additional handles on each end facilitate two-person carrying. The ergonomic shoulder strap is also padded.

Kata, (805) 520-4725, Fax (805) 520-7342.



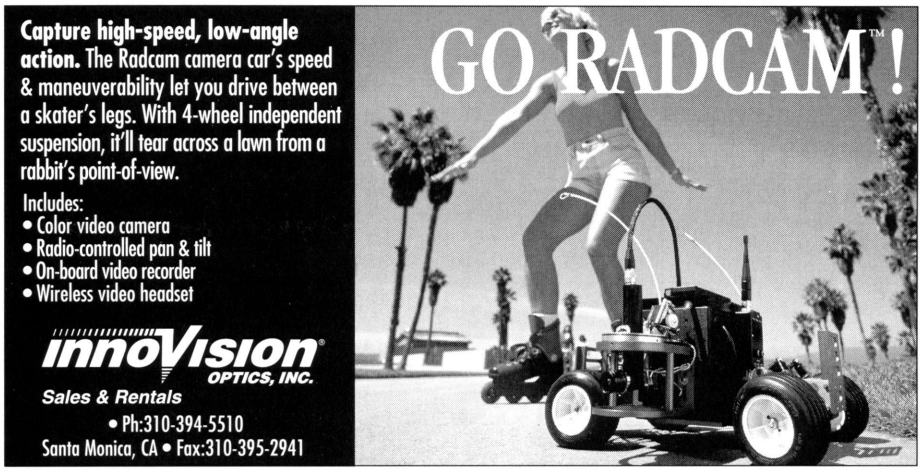
New Lightning Unit

Lightning Strikes introduces its most advanced electronic lightning effects system, a 250,000W model that offers dramatically brighter light and more precise control, while eliminating the need for unwieldy and often unpredictable scissor arc systems. This unit instantly drenches film and video sets and concert stages in more than seven million lumens of 5600°K daylight. Programmable digital controls allow the operator to produce repeatable combinations of flashes, and manipulate timing and brightness. Lightning Strikes units feature fully sealed, weatherproof fixtures for safe use with rain towers. The system's self-limiting electrical load capability assures optimum generator tolerance. The 250,000W unit measures 42" x 17" x 11" and weighs 55 lbs.

Lightning Strikes, (800) 321-3644, Fax (213) 461-6361.

Quantel V4 System

Quantel introduces the Henry V4, a new tool for use in effects editing and in the broadcast and postproduction markets. The V4 contains the full set of Henry features, providing users with the ultimate in creative freedom and versatility, including four concurrent superlayers that offer up to 36 simultaneous processes on-line to the operator. Also, since most processing on the Henry V4 is effectively real-time, finished material can be produced at rapid speeds. The entire Henry range of visual effects editing systems comes fully specified with Quantel's Open Platform Exchange Network (OPEN), which offers an unmatched level of connectivity between Quantel systems and computer-based equipment. Henry has storage capacity of either 30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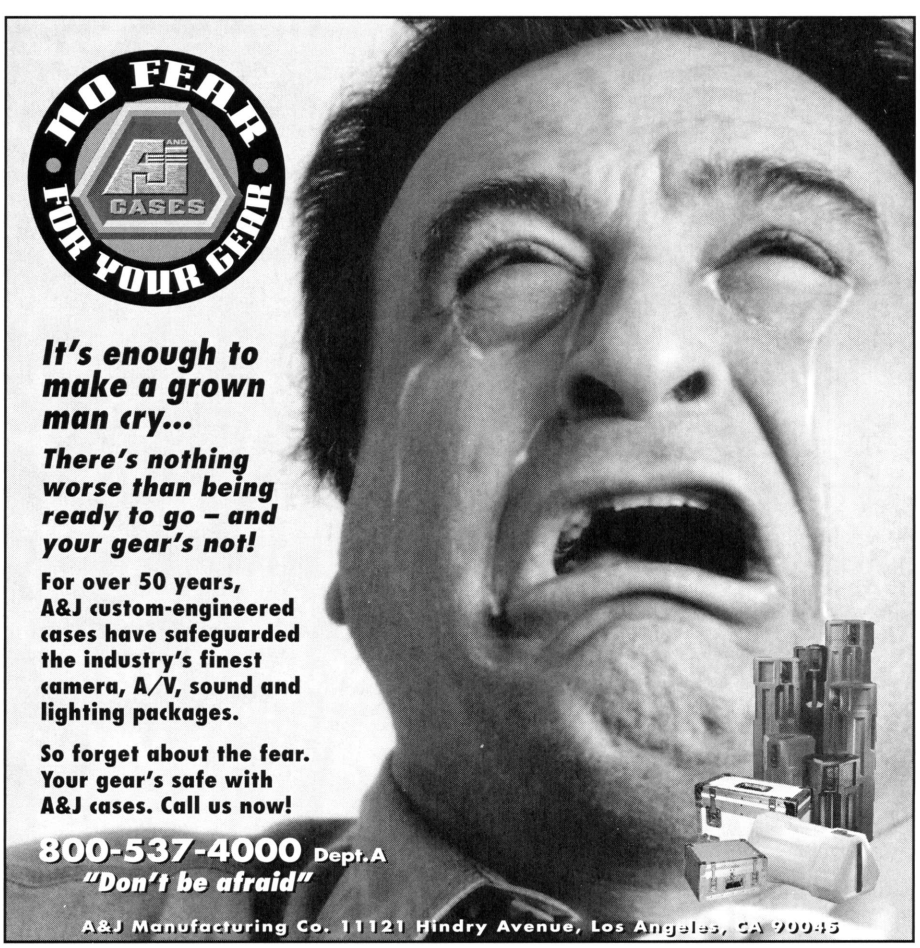
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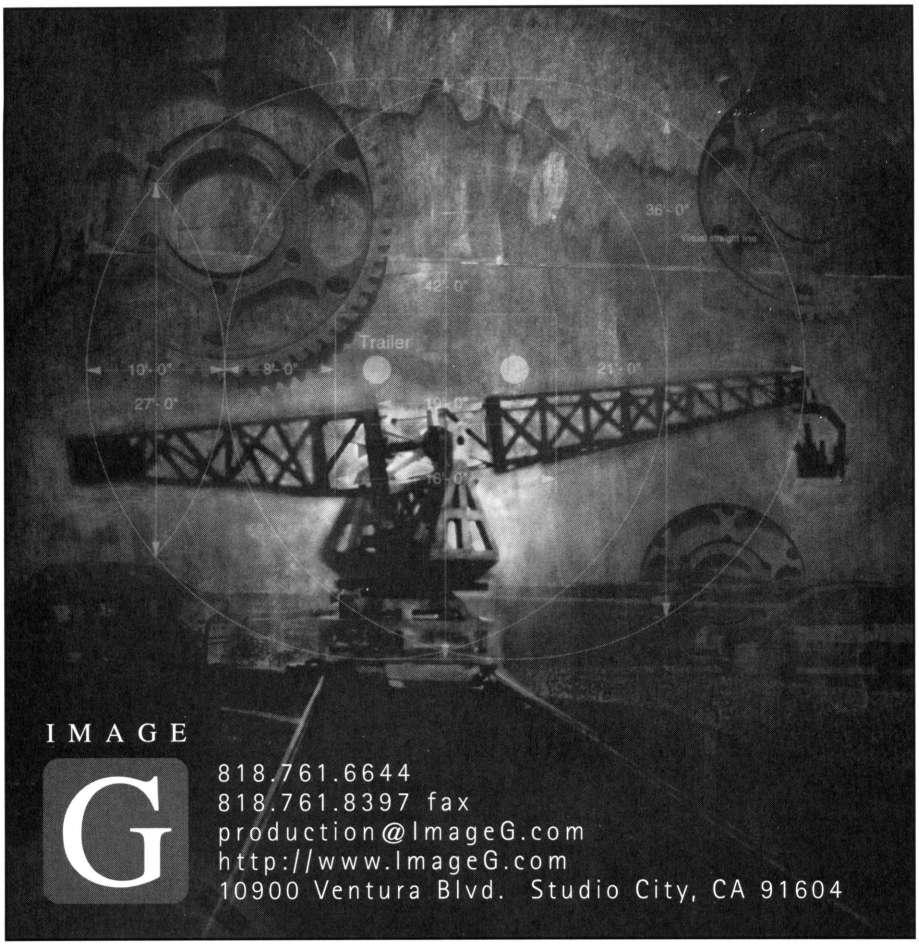

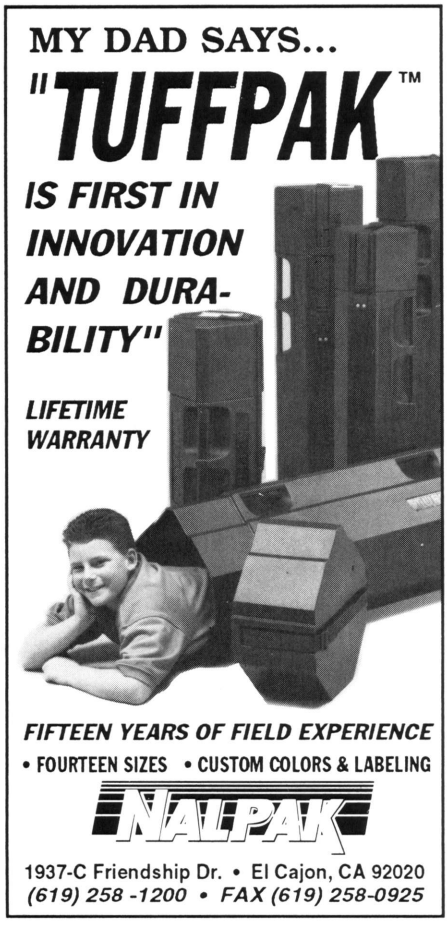
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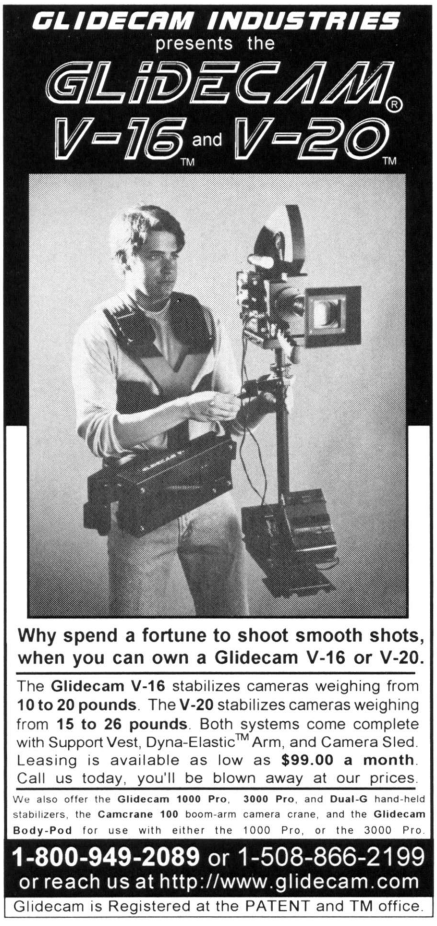
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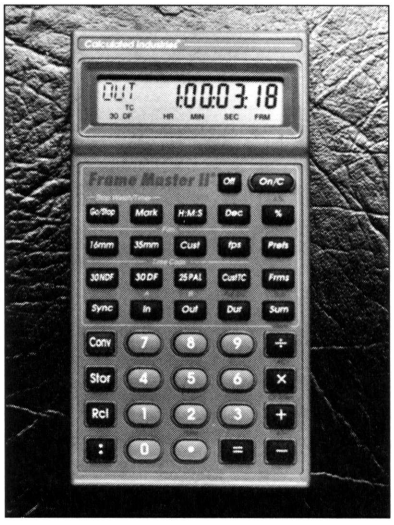


Time-Code Calculator

Calculated Industries announces the release of the Frame Master II, a new time-code calculator for video and film professionals. An upgrade of the firm's original model, this calculator offers calculations in the following formats: NTSC/SMPTE time code (drop and non-drop frame), PAL/SECAM time code, custom/user definable time code, real time, 16mm feet-frames, 35mm feet-frames and custom feet-frames. Users can also convert between these various formats. The Frame Master II also includes in/out/dur keys for quick edit calculations, a new sync/offset function to find matching edit points (even in different media) and a telecine adjusted run time function. Additionally, the instrument features a built-in stopwatch timer that can count in real time, time code or even feet-frames. Plus, it works as a standard math calculator with percent, 10-memory storage and auto shut-off. It comes with a user's guide, two-year long-life lithium battery, vinyl case and one-year warranty.

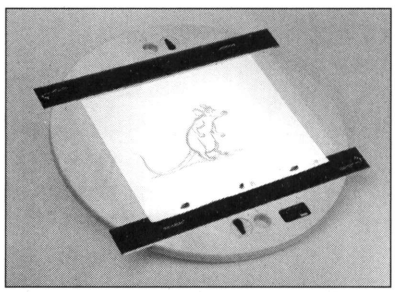
Calculated Industries, (702) 885-4900, ext. 204, Fax (702) 885-4995.

Digital Optimizer

DB Technologies introduces the dB3000S, a powerful 44.1-96 kHz digital audio processor that is also a full sample rate/data format converter for monitoring and measurement. DB Tech-

nologies' phase-lock loop allows external sync input referencing of the output from an external clock without performance degradation. The unit's features include: sample rate conversion (40-51, 88.2 and 96kHz); programmable frame delay of up to 10 frames for video resynchronization 0.1 frame steps; acoustic bit correction of up to 19 bits on a 16-bit format using selectable dither types (flat, high-pass, triangular, off) and four-noise shaping curves; high-resolution reference meter with zoom, peak hold, settable reference level, and up to 90 dB of meter gain; 44.1 to 96kHz SR digital tone generator and digital signal boost or cut.

Audio Intervisual Design, (213) 845-1155, Fax (213) 845-1170.



Animation Drawing Disc

Fax Animation has produced a new animation artist drawing disc. This precision-machined hardwood disc incorporates the most popular features of its predecessor, but with some new design concepts to make it cost-effective. With its 12- and 16-field coverage, the disc is constructed of lightweight, durable, 13-ply, veneer-finished Baltic hardwood. This material allows for easy rotation of the disc by using just one finger. Other new design features include dovetailed sliding aluminum peg bars with markings in 1/20" increments, and a unique recessed locking system.

Alan Gordon Enterprises, (213) 466-3561, Fax (213) 871-2193.

Transportation Cases

Photoflex introduces the Cruzer and Expedition as part of its new Transpac line of pro equipment transportation cases. These rugged, wheeled duffel bags with built-in dollies are well-suited for the hauling of tripods, lightstands, softboxes and other bulky equipment. Water-resistant, durable polyester fabric helps protect equipment from damp or humid weather. A double-layered PVC floorboard ensures solid

photos by Eric Eggly, Point Seven Studios

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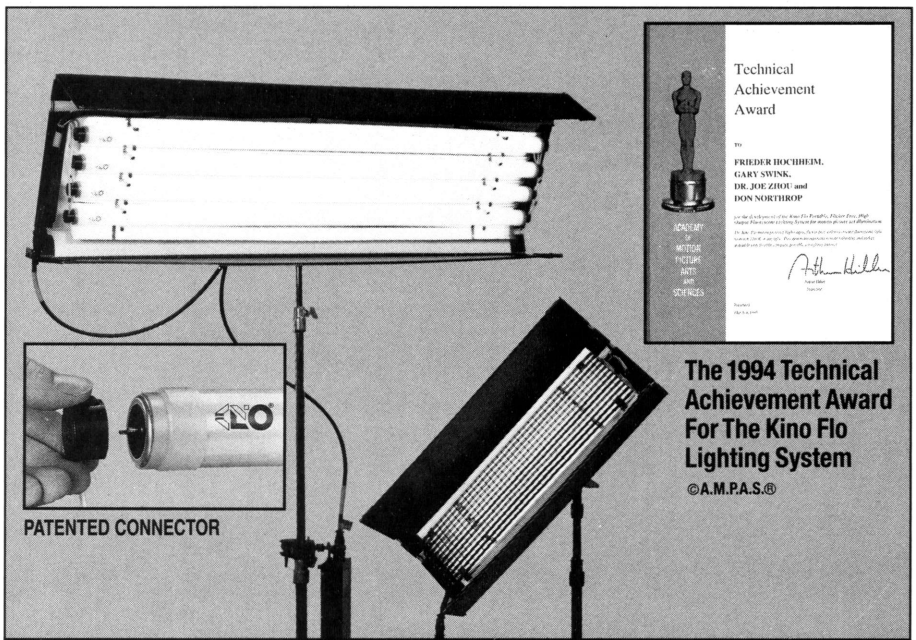
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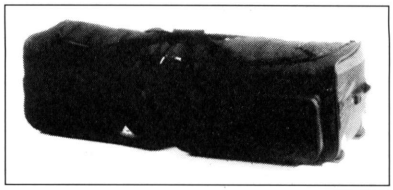
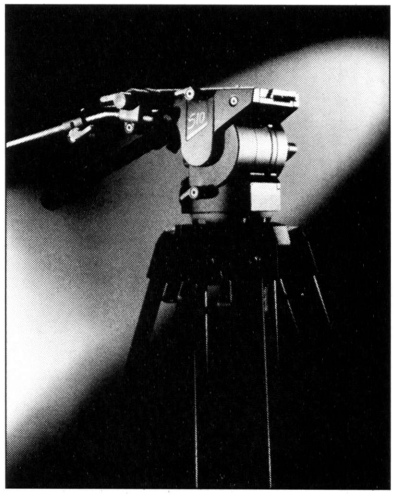


support, and leather-like handle grips provide a strong, comfortable hold. Both bags feature double-stitching on all seams and double-sewn, self-repairing zippers, a spacious, undivided main compartment and two zippered pockets on the outside. The Cruzer's main compartment is 28' x 14" x 14", and the Expedition's is 47" x 14" x 14".

Photoflex, (800) 486-2674, Fax (408) 454-9600.



Video Fluid Head

Bogen Photo Corp. announces the Bogen 510 Pro Video Head, which is designed for use with the new generation of CCD and smaller ENG camera weighing up to 19 pounds. The head incorporates all of the features required by videographers and on-location camera operators, including an advanced three-step plus 0 drag system that ensures smooth repeatable pan-and-tilt control with smooth stops and starts. In addition, it has an advanced balanced adjustment with return to center characteristics controlled with fingertip ease.

Bogen Photo Corp., (201) 818-9500, Fax (201) 818-9177. ◆

Savoring the Apple's Many Flavors

by Brooke Comer

Cinematographer Michael Mayers (*Spanking the Monkey*) has enough critically acclaimed feature films, popular TV series, and award-winning documentaries on his resumé to get steady work in Hollywood, but the New York-based cameraman chooses to remain on the East Coast, citing the diversity of projects offered there.

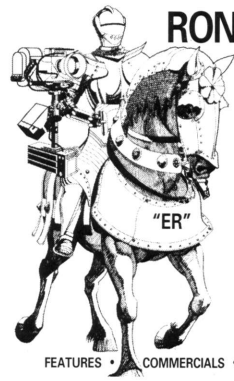
"There's so much interesting work happening in New York, and it has to do with who's based here," he explains. "There's National Geographic and the Learning Channel in Washington D.C., and the Discovery Channel in Maryland." Fox and Nickelodeon, for whom Mayers shot *House of Buggin'* and an episode of *The Adventures of Pete and Pete*, respectively, both have production centers in New York. But his main reason for remaining in the Big Apple is the "cool independent features" that tend to come out of New York rather than Los Angeles. "I don't know why that is," he observes. "Maybe it's because people get on the 'studio track' out there."

Mayers recently camped out in the Dinosaur Hall at New York's Museum of Natural History for a week, while shooting a portion of the National Geographic documentary *Dinosaurs of the Gobi Desert*. "That scene involved big lighting, as well as dollying crane moves, and had to dovetail with animation that would be done later on top of our footage," he explains. "We had a good-sized lighting package and a crew of eight. It was full-blown feature-style lighting, and *Geographic* needed a cinematographer who could work on a large canvas and maintain a documentary sensibility. That is where I find myself — working on the fuzzy edge between the two genres."

The cinematographer also captured the poignance of lost America with a Hi-8 camera for *Route 66: The Mother Road*. Mayers took a while to become accustomed to the notion of shooting in the home video format, but once he got onto the nation's most revered highway, "it was fantastic to have this tiny camera, which gave us a wonderful cinema verité point of view. My longtime assistant, Jeff Baker, shot about half the show. Jeff was thrilled with the little camera. You can tell Jeff's shots because they're the ones where the camera will start on a close-up of our subject, photographer Roy Gumpel, at the wheel of our '62 Caddie, go out the passenger window, around over the hood, and back in the driver's window— all at highway speeds!

> "The moment I acknowledged the camera, the jig would be up and a friendly chat would turn self-conscious. Shooting from the hip like that is a luxury you just don't get in any other format."
>
> —cinematographer Michael Mayers

"I spent entire days looking though the viewfinder. We'd just chat with people as I held the camera under my arm. I had to resist the temptation to look down, because the moment I acknowledged the camera, the jig would be up and a friendly chat would turn self-conscious. Shooting from the hip like that is a luxury you just don't get in any other format. That experience



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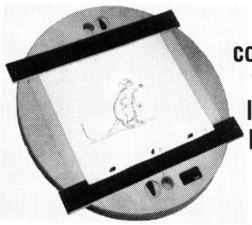

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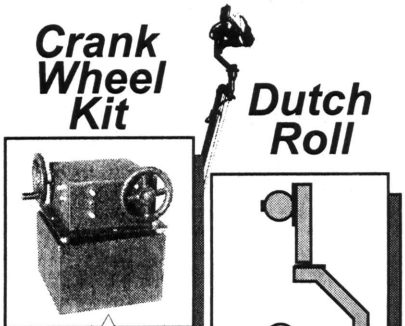

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taught me that a show can be compelling to an audience in direct proportion to how much of a relationship the filmmaker is willing to enter into with his or her subject. The closer you get, the better the show."

The documentary's tight budget wouldn't allow Mayer to obtain some much-needed aerial shots near Oklahoma City, so he bartered with the pilot of a small plane to take him up in the air. Fortunately for the production, the pilot agreed, in exchange for a case of Corona beer. Notes Mayers of his flying photography, "The aerials, and in fact the whole show, came out incredibly well, even though we were shooting Hi-8. We planned to shoot on 16mm, but the *Geographic* executives liked the pitch we presented on Hi-8 so much that they didn't want us to change a thing."

His work on *Route 66* helped him land another Land Rover movie, *Louis and Clark and George*, a wild romp which follows the misadventures of two cons and a brunette bombshell. "It's a great example of how documentary techniques can heighten the excitement of a feature," he says. "I shot about 75 percent of the film handheld, and the actors never held marks. I often didn't even know where they would be going. It was a thrill for me to shoot, and it will be a thrill for an audience to watch. It's a wonderfully raw kind of film."

A flexible cameraman needs a flexible camera, and Mayers credits his two Super 16 Aatons for their diversity. "They're just rock-solid cameras," he says. "They're wonderfully quiet, and the eyepiece is great. It sits on my shoulder like a cat — just like the company's ad — and I feel as if it's an extension of my eyeball. The Aaton allows me to do things handheld that I'd have to do on a Steadicam or a dolly with any other camera."

Since he doesn't always have a full crew at his disposal, Mayers has learned the value of being resourceful; on many a project, he's found himself with no assistants whatsoever. "I can't always order a five-ton grip and electrical package just because it's convenient for me," he says. "I'll try to work out a lighting scheme with one big light a maybe a bunch of Mole Pars. I'll give depth to a scene by picking up details instead of lighting whole streets, as I might do on a feature." ◆

Books in Review

by George Turner

Hit and Run
by Nancy Griffin and Kim Masters
Simon & Schuster, hardback, 479 pps., $25

It seems that everyone in the film business has read or is reading this tragic, hilarious and appalling chunk of investigative journalism, which made the best-seller list almost before the ink on its pages had dried. Newspapers have been deluged with letters regarding *Hit and Run*. Adding to this outpouring are cries of outrage from studio big-shots who claim to have been misquoted by authors Nancy Griffin, the former deputy editor of *Premiere,* and Kim Masters, an ex-*Washington Post* reporter currently serving as a contributing editor to both *Time* and *Vanity Fair*.

The book's drama begins with Sony Corporation buying Columbia Pictures Entertainment (which included TriStar Pictures) at a vastly overpriced $3.4 billion and paying off Columbia's debts of $1.6 billion. Columbia had been negotiating to buy Guber-Peters Entertainment Co., which was contracted to Warner Bros., so Sony went ahead with the deal to the tune of $200 million. Jon Peters, a junior high-school dropout and former hairdresser with a violent temper and enormous *chutzpah,* and Peter Guber, a pony-tailed, roughshod climber of the executive ladder, somehow convinced the Sony chiefs that they were the very guys to run the company. Peters and Guber then cut another astonishing deal; the duo sold all of their own company's stocks to Sony for $200 million ($55 million of which went to themselves). They would also receive $2.7 million in annual salaries (which rose to $2.9 million over five years), an 8.08% share of any increase in the company's value, and a $50 million bonus pool to be paid after five years. Sony then had to make a huge breach of contract settlement (reputed to be about $8 million) with Warner Bros. because Guber and Peters had closed the Sony deal while still under contract with the venerable studio.

An unbelievable orgy of overspending followed: the hiring of a top-heavy load of executives; the greenlighting of expensive, eventually aborted projects, as well as some disastrous big-budget films; the frivolous use of company jets; an enormous redesigning of the Columbia lot (the former M-G-M); and a series of executive firings, the settlements of which cost in the millions. Sex scandals involving various high-rollers and Heidi Fleiss' ladies of the evening also ensued.

Though the approximately 200 interviews with people, many famous, who "were there" during the Guber-Peters years make for spellbinding reading, a great deal of the sources declined to be identified; this puts us in a position of having to digest a lot of what a judge would deem hearsay evidence. *Hit and Run* is lively reading, but more than one grain of salt may be necessary to swallow all that it postulates.

In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing
by Walter Murch
Silman-James Press, 115 pps., paperback, $12.95

It's always an event when a working professional filmmaker writes a book about his particular area of expertise; it doesn't happen too often because film work leaves little time or inclination for such a demanding chore. The slim but insightful *In the Blink of an Eye* is based on a lecture given to the Australian Film Commission by Walter Murch, a director, film editor, screenwriter and sound designer whose various credits include *Apocalypse Now* (for which he won an Oscar), *The Conversation* (which brought him two British Academy awards), *The Godfather* trilogy, *American Graffiti, Julia, Ghost,* and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.*

Peripherally, this volume is merely a "how-to" book. Some technical

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problems are addressed, but the emphasis is on the aesthetics which make the difference between just putting a film together and actually discovering the path that the film should take. Murch offers insights into continuity and discontinuity in editing, and the necessity of multiple editors; he's at his best when discussing the six criteria of a good cut. Murch also deals with more timely issues, as well; he includes a thoroughly considered discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of digital editing.

Murch's refreshingly different tack, which encourages audiences to become participants rather than spectators, makes for both scintillating and informative reading.

Sounds of Movies: Interviews with the Creators of Feature Soundtracks
by Nick Pasquariello Jr.
Port Bridge Books,
P.O. Box 42791,
San Francisco, CA 94142,
225 pps., paperback, $19.95

To the uninitiated, sound mixing is as mysterious an art as film editing. Nick Pasquariello, a contributor to such industry magazines as *Mix, In Motion,* and *Studio Sound,* regularly interviews some of the leading mixers in the field. By perusing the dozen conversations featured in *Sound of Movies,* one can learn much about the complexities involved in various projects.

Most fascinating are the accounts of recording in China's Forbidden City for *The Last Emperor;* the dangers inherent to capturing the din of the America Cup race for *Wind;* the weirdness entailed in securing an aura for *Mishima;* and enhancing the period atmosphere of *Tucker.* Discussions examining the ramifications of a global standardization for multimedia production, methods of restoring archival soundtracks, and the preparation of music and effects for foreign release dubs also prove of interest. Added interviews conducted with those peripheral to the sound recordists' work — director Carroll Ballard, cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, ASC, AIC, and designer Dean Tavoularis — round out Pasquariello's tome. ◆

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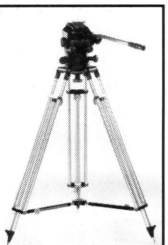

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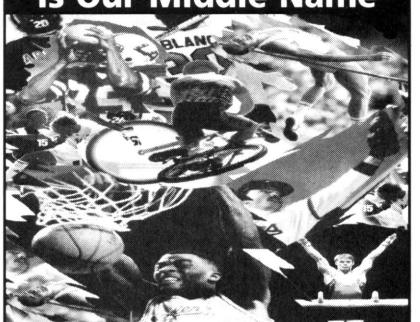

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From the Clubhouse

Wexler Documents Democratic Convention for *Nightline*

Nearly three decades after Haskell Wexler, ASC chronicled the riot-ridden 1968 Democratic National Convention in his directorial debut *Medium Cool*, the veteran cinematographer shot footage of this summer's Democratic Convention for ABC's *Nightline*. The producers of the news program solicited Wexler's camera expertise to present a more candid view of the convention, and to contrast it with the tumultuous events of the past.

Said Wexler in a *Los Angeles Times* interview, "I wanted to see the differences. I'm curious to know if the lessons of 1968 were learned. What is presented to the American people is the violence (that occurred) in '68, the superficial action things that sell on television... [This year] everyone is intent on having a peaceful [convention]. It is very encouraging. I've seen a tremendously overt attempt to be sane. The thing about '68 was insanity. There's a scene in *Medium Cool* in which a young man walks by with a sign that says 'Sanity, please.' If anything summarizes what I was feeling at that time, it is that sign."

While filming angry crowds in Grant Park during that infamous event, Wexler was severely teargassed. One of his assistants then picked up his camera and shot scenes of the cinematographer being carted away to the hospital.

In an attempt to stir up that Sixties fervor at this year's event, some 500 demonstrators with no known collective political orientation tried to barge through an area cordoned off and guarded by police. The protest, however, was thwarted peacefully with no police batons raised and no arrests made. But aside from that incident, those of the MTV Generation were much less enthusiastic about politics than their baby-booming predecessors.

Wexler, a Chicago native, made note of this generation gap in the *L.A. Times*, saying, "People in 1968 were alive and interested, and ready to fight and argue for the democratic process. There's nothing worse for democracy than when there is withdrawal."

◆◆◆

Suhrstedt Inducted into ASC

The ASC's newest active member is Baltimore native Tim Suhrstedt. Originally an economics student at Pennsylvania's Lehigh University, he became fascinated with film after taking an honors cinema course, and ended up shooting a movie as his thesis project. After graduating in 1970, Suhrstedt worked as a director-cameraman and staff cinematographer for Maryland public broadcasting station WMPB, where he shot documentaries on the performing arts scene in the Baltimore-Washington area. Suhrstedt then relocated to Los Angeles, where he studied cinematography at the American Film Institute. For the next few years, he shot documentaries, industrials and dramatic shorts, as well as second-unit footage for several independent films.

In 1981, Suhrstedt became a full-fledged director of photography with the indie venture *House on Sorority Row*. His subsequent credits include the features *Android*, *Suburbia*, *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, *Mystic Pizza* and *Feds*, and the cable movies-of-the-week *The Ratings Game*, *Slow Burn*, *Hoover* and *Rainbow Drive*. After being inducted into the International Photographer's Guild in 1990, Surhstedt served as cinematographer on Emilio Estevez's *Men at Work*, Peter Bogdanovich's *Noises Off*, Andy Wolk's *Traces of Red*, Donald Petrie's *The Favor* and a several episodes of the award-winning TV series *Picket Fences*. In 1994, he became director of photography on the critically acclaimed medical drama *Chicago Hope*. His efforts on that series earned him a 1994 ASC Award nomination for the pilot and a 1995 Emmy Award for the episode "Over the Rainbow." Surhstedt's most recent project is Michael Pressman's feature *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*, starring Michelle Pfeiffer and Peter Gallagher.

◆

On a Thursday night in February, 1913, four Hollywood cinematographers established a secret society "for the benefit and furtherance of the camera-men of the motion picture industry." Within six years, the group would merge with its East Coast counterpart to become the American Society of Cinematographers, the most famous camera club in photographic history.

Static Days in Hollywood: The Roots of the ASC

by L. Sprague Anderson

In those days, every cinematographer had had work ruined by static discharges in his film. As of all them had the word "static" on their minds, the group was christened the Static Club. Bill Alder, the club's first Secretary, designed the club insignia — a burst of gold aperture static on a blue field — from actual discharge patterns he'd recorded while shooting.

The club was a fraternal, educational, and honorary organization, but as its goal was to improve the cameraman's position in the business, all proceeding were kept secret; they feared repercussions from the producers, who detested anything that smacked of trade unionism. The Patents Trust was also dangerous, although its legal power had begun to erode the previous year. At the outset, the club required a secret pledge and an initiation ceremony for its the members. Gradually, the secrecy and the rituals faded away; the club even began to publish a newsletter, *Static Flashes;* the organization advertised in the trade papers, and hosted gala events with celebrity emcees like Thomas Ince and Anna Held.

Members were admitted by an election process, and the requirements for entry were rather strict. An applicant needed at least one year of experience with a regular producing company; one's credentials were carefully examined by a three-man membership committee, and starting in 1916, one had to submit to an oral examination, after which the membership-at-large would decide upon an in or out vote. If only three members voted against an applicant, entrance was denied. The initiation fee rose from five dollars to 10 to 25 over the years, a reflection of the club's growing status and the improved earning power of its members.

The clubhouse at 1839 Santa Cruz was the hangout of the finest cameramen in the business, or at least the finest cameramen on the West Coast. Included among these were trick work expert Steve Norton; 12-year veteran Billy Foster, who had worked for Selig, Universal and Charlie Chaplin; John Boyle, the chief cinematographer on the 1917 version of *Cleopatra*; Walter Lundin, cameraman for Harold Lloyd; Rollie Totheroh, who would be Chaplin's cameraman for 38 years; Lyman Broening, who had a distinguished career at Famous Players; and Homer Scott, survivor of countless Mack Sennett comedies. The club had 68 members at the beginning of 1915 and, at one time or another, over 100 cinematographers wore the diamond-shaped Static Club pin.

Some brother Statics based in Santa Barbara were far enough away to be considered non-resident members. They petitioned to form their own chapter and, after due consideration, were granted a charter on June 25, 1916 to organize as Branch #2 of the Static Club.

Meetings at the main branch took place on Tuesday nights. After an hour or so of official business, the members partook of refreshments and enjoyed sophisticated entertainment, ranging from lectures on lenses to concerts by popular singers. For the first three years, members chipped in for their wine and spirits, and then a motion was passed to pay the bar bill from club funds. At times, they were a rowdy bunch. Entertainment expenses were partially defrayed by a 25-cent fine for the use of profane language in the clubhouse. The initiation ceremonies involved a goat (which was kept tethered in the yard) in some unspecified way; the club got complaints from the neighbors, both about the goat and the noises from the club rooms, until the organization finally moved to more congenial lodgings up the street at 1917 Santa Cruz.

Dances and smokers were popular diversions, and viewing films together at the local theaters was a natural pastime. On one occasion (Nov. 3, 1916), the members went out as a group to watch D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, and another time President Charles Rosher got them free tickets for *Joan the Woman*. The membership even installed a player piano, but had cause to regret it later when a legal hassle, referred to cryptically as "the piano affair," took nearly a year and a half to settle.

But above all, the club cared for its members. Unemployed cameramen were matched with job openings (though the club made it clear that it wasn't an employment bureau), and if a member fell on hard times, his brothers were there to help. The sick committee visited the afflicted — Fred Granville, when he was bitten by a rattlesnake; Robert Walter, struck down by sunburn; and Allen Seigler, who fell through a skylight on his wedding day. Notices were read of stolen cameras and fly-by-night operators, and a regular exchange of information and members was carried on with the East Coast group, the Cinema Camera Club, which remained an independent organization until the merger in 1919.

When hard times hit the West Coast studios in 1918, the Static Club suffered as well. Even changing the name to the Cinema Camera Club of California didn't help. With the Great War underway, many of the members had already disappeared into the vast maw of the military; others allowed their dues to lapse. For a while, the organization ran out of steam, but it came back to life four days before Christmas when Billy Foster hosted a get-together at his house. The 15 cameramen present hammered out an agreement to bring the two clubs, east and west, together in one national organization. Two weeks later, on January 8, 1919, a charter was granted by the State of California, and the American Society of Cinematographers was born. ◆

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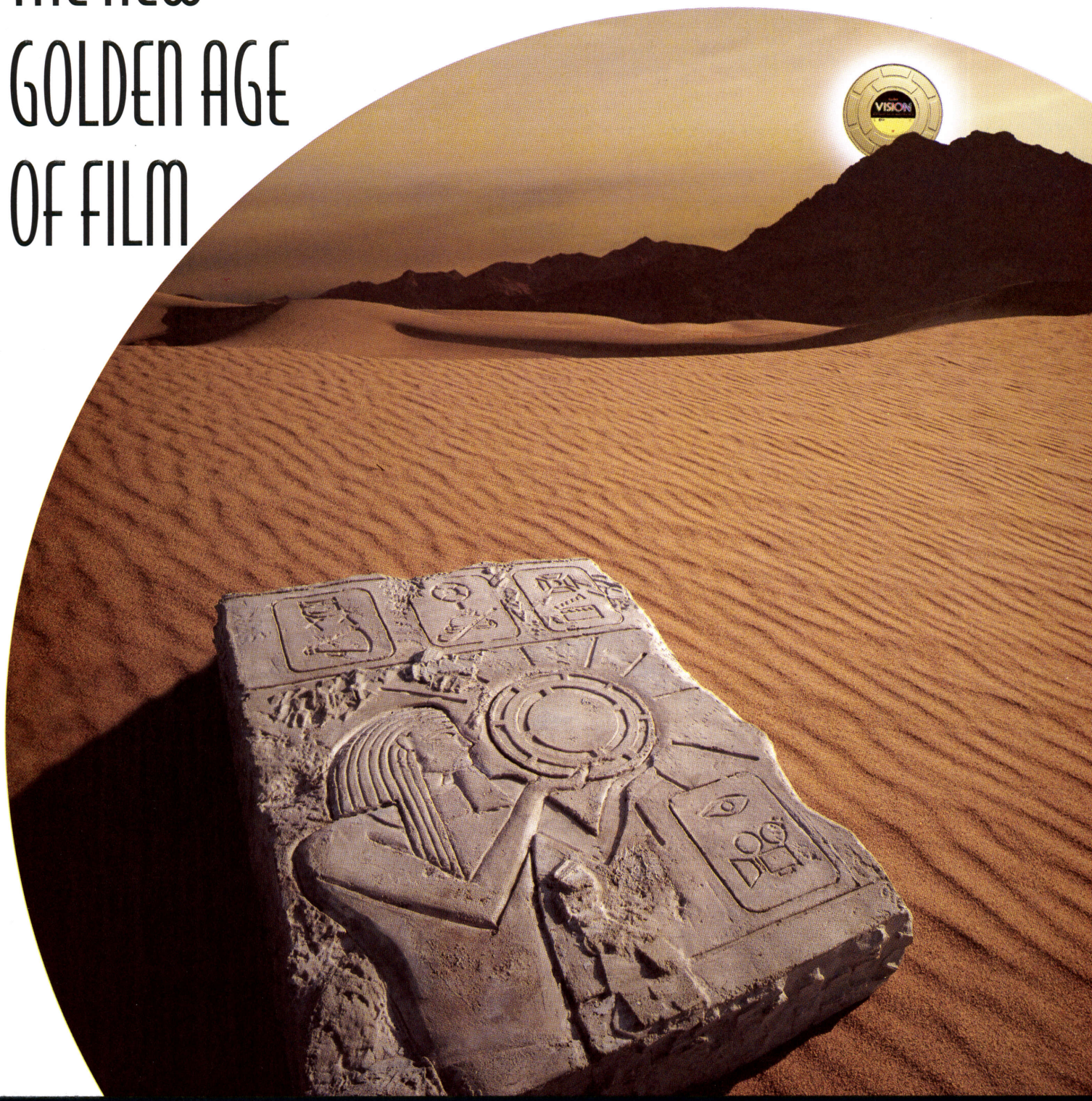

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